

June

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE

15 cents



Catch-'em-Alive Jack Abernathy, Robert Mill,
H. Bedford-Jones, James Francis Dwyer, William
Makin, George F. Worts, Leland Jamieson

The end of a remarkable hunt: Theodore Roosevelt goes on a hunt with Jack Abernathy and sees him capture a coyote alive with his hands.



Photograph copyrighted by Alexander Lambert, M. D., 1905.

Famous Frontiersmen

THE Wild West has gone, never to return. This was of course as inevitable as was the passing of the Indian and buffalo before the advance of the settler in his covered wagon. Such has been the undeviating march of circumstances throughout the world.

In the newly opened up frontier, the wild life is the first to vanish. It has been able to exist alongside of primitive man with his spear and arrow and trap, for his weapons have been no more than sufficient to keep him supplied with food and clothing. With the advent of the civilized settler, the change has become rapid. Once the wild game has seriously begun to interfere with the settler's crops, he has taken the matter into his own hands, and with the aid of the rifle he has defended his property and destroyed the wild life. With the disappearance of the latter, the entire system of living of the original inhabitant has necessarily changed. A minority has adapted itself to the mode of living of its new neighbors, but the great majority has followed the trail of the vanished game.

For many years, depending in great

measure upon the fertility of the land and its adaptability for agriculture and mining, the frontier remains wild and untamed, with huge areas under the control of but a few individuals. Then the homesteaders arrive, and the great properties are broken up. The vast herds of cattle either disappear altogether, or are broken up into small groups. Barbed wire divides the ranges. The amazing advances in the facilities of transportation have of course done much to hasten this metamorphosis of the frontier. Probably no single factor has contributed as largely as has the automobile. . . .

Jack Abernathy was born and raised in the Old West, and writes at first hand of this vanished phase in the cycle of our country's existence. My father, in his "Autobiography" and in "Outdoor Pastimes" has told in no uncertain language of his respect and admiration and friendship for Abernathy. These feelings have been echoed by all with whom he has come in contact and who know him well. The story he tells in the chapters of his book are indeed a valuable contribution to the history of our nation.

—Kermitt Roosevelt

*"Catch-'Em-Alive" Jack Abernathy's own story
begins on page 129 of this issue.*

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BLUE BOOK



JUNE, 1935

MAGAZINE

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But Samuel Samuels, redoubtable captain of the *Dreadnought*, had not earned his name of the hardest-boiled skipper of the day for nothing.

"I'll see them in hell, and pumping thunder, before I sail without them!" he bellowed. And he set to sea.

"All hands aft," was now the command and the men mustered sulkily on deck. "Show your knives, men!" Taking the knives, the carpenter broke off the points, while the Captain read the crew a deep-sea sermon in fire-and-brimstone style. But as the land dropped under the horizon trouble started. Samuels gathered his officers in the cabin and asked them how they stood. All but one showed the white feather.

"I'm with you, Captain," said the second mate quietly. "But I have only one pepper-box pistol."

"Fill it up, pull the trigger and trust in God!" boomed the old man.

For two days the ship, running with full canvas before a freshening wind, was the scene of a desperate battle of wits and fists. Samuels knocked down the leader, put him in irons. Then with the aid of his big Newfoundland dog, his faithful mate and some German emigrants whom he armed with iron bars, he resisted the ferocious charge of the "Bloody Forty," shooting on deck from the rigging. He forced them into the forecastle and battened them down without food. In the meantime the ship was staggering under a heavy wind, with all sails set.

After three days a beaten and starving crew came out, crying for mercy. Captain Samuels set them to holystoning decks. "Work first; eat afterward," was the word. He had earned their respect—and when the ship docked the Bloody Forty gave their only conqueror three rousing cheers!

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The Queen of Sheba

By WILLIAM
J. MAKIN

Illustrated by
John Clymer

The Intelligence officer known as the Red Wolf of Arabia finds that a woman is behind the Abyssinian crisis—and learns how deadly the female of the species can be.

JOHN CLYMER



"This moment is for love," whispered Sari Mansur. "You and I—" Her arms tightened. But as Rodgers sought to tear the jeweled fingers away, there came a blow—and a wave of darkness swept over him.

FOR a moment the ragged, disheveled figure swayed in the doorway. Eyes half-closed as in agony gazed from beneath matted hair at the strange scene. One hand clutched a curtain, desperately.

A solitary, lithe man in white was seated in that mud-walled room of Aden, playing a piano. A man entirely engrossed! The bowed back ignored the swaying figure in the doorway. The ears were deaf to everything but the sonorous music conjured forth. With a pained, rueful grin on its brown face, the figure in the doorway padded toward the player....

Long, lean fingers moved rapidly over the black and white keyboard of the piano. They were very much alive, and yet at moments rigid with nervous tension. The bare, spacious room with a few gaudy curtains hung athwart the mud walls, resounded to the brilliance of the music.

Paul Rodgers, an Anglo-American Intelligence officer known to the natives as the Red Wolf of Arabia, was playing the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue by Bach. The exciting contrapuntal quality of the music suited his mood. The smooth casque of his red hair was bowed; the ears were alert to every contrasting tone of the fugue. Only the figure padding painfully toward him was ignored. Bach was a god, and for the moment Paul Rodgers was an adoring disciple.

The heavily draped lamp sent no shadow from the disheveled figure. Red

Rodgers had reached the thrilling part of the fugue, which is a heavily decorated masterpiece built up piece by piece with mathematical certainty. His fingers sped rapidly along the keyboard. Suddenly they faltered. They had come to a blob of red wetness on the white keys.

The fugue came to an end in a feeble discord as, startled, Rodgers looked up.

The disheveled figure was leaning heavily against the piano. A trickle of red was coming from the mouth. But the rueful smile was still there, and the spasm-drawn face nodded.

"Sorry, Rodgers," murmured the figure. "They got me as I was coming to your house. Knifed me in the back—"

And he pitched forward across the keyboard, sending out a mad, crashing discord.

From out of the dream world of music Paul Rodgers came into instant action. His hands stretched out and lifted bodily the man sprawled over the keyboard. He carried him easily to a low couch. Then he darted to a corner cabinet, brought forth brandy and carried it in a glass to the prone figure on the couch.

He lifted up the head with its matted hair and beard-raddled cheeks. The face was brown and dirty. Bare feet stuck out from the tattered burnous of an Arab beggar.

"Drink this, Tomlinson!" said the Intelligence officer quietly.

He forced the glass against the clenched teeth of the man. Despite the

disguise, Rodgers had recognized him—Lieutenant Tomlinson of the Aden Intelligence, a man who had done good work among the tribes in the Aden Protectorate. And now he was dying, a knife wound in his back.

"Too late, Rodgers," sighed the man on the couch. "I'll be a dead man in a few minutes."

Already a gray pallor seemed to be spreading over his face.

"Why did you come here?" asked Rodgers.

Tomlinson tried to smile, but failed.

"Just to—to tell you a tale," he groaned. "But—damn—what did Shakespeare say? . . . 'A tale full of sound and fury—signifying nothing.' Thought you'd understand—"

Once more Paul Rodgers forced brandy through those clenching teeth.

"Go on," he insisted.

The eyes were glazing.

"Damn' fine music—you were playing," he mumbled. "What was it?"

"Bach."

"Ah, yes. Cathedrals—religious music—the Old Testament."

The dying mind was wandering. But the slit body, out of which the lifeblood was dribbling, made a final convulsive effort.

"Rodgers, you there?"

"Yes, Tomlinson."

"Everything is dark. Don't forget, the Bible! The Queen of Sheba."

"The Queen of Sheba?"

"She—she's in Aden tonight—damn her!"

And in that final effort the man shuddered, and died. Paul Rodgers, his hands sticky with blood, was left gazing down upon a dead comrade. Lieutenant Tomlinson had paid the penalty of many who wandered in the tortuous byways of Arab intrigue.

But brave and sardonic to the end! Even as the tears came to Rodgers' eyes, he was startled to hear a choking sob from the doorway. He swung round. A half-naked Arab boy, about ten years old, was squatting there. His dark, liquid eyes were gazing with a doglike devotion at the dead man.

QUIETLY, Rodgers sidled up to the boy and brought him inside. The lad promptly groveled by the couch and sobbed and cried. The Intelligence officer waited. In a few minutes the boy drew himself up. His lip was quivering, but he was trying to control himself. It

is not good for an Arab to display emotion before others.

"Who are you?" asked Rodgers quietly in Arabic.

"The slave of this brave lord," said the boy, indicating the dead man. "May Allah take his soul into Paradise," he added devoutly.

"What is your name?"

"Abdul—just Abdul."

"And whence have you come?"

The question caused a frightened gleam in those dark eyes. Once more he looked at the dead man.

"He was my friend, Abdul," said Paul Rodgers. "And he wanted me to know."

The boy shivered.

"We had spent the evening on the beach," he said. "Wah! A dark and fearsome place."

"What were you doing there?"

"My lord gazed upon the old dhow of the Queen of Sheba."

"The Queen of Sheba!"

ONCE again that exotic Biblical character had intruded into this tragedy. Red Rodgers knew the dhow of which the Arab boy spoke—a few rotting timbers bearing the semblance of a boat displayed by guides to credulous tourists as the very barque in which Sheba sailed the Red Sea on her historic visit to Solomon, King of Kings.

"And what then?" asked Rodgers.

Tears again gleamed in the boy's eyes.

"We came back to the Arab town. We entered the dark and narrow streets. It was very late. In the doorways men, wrapped in their burnouses, slept. I was leading the way, a camel's-length ahead.

"Suddenly I heard a choking cry behind. I turned. Some of those sleepers had risen like men from the dead. They attacked my lord and master from behind. A knife was plunged into his back. And then they fled!"

Impulsively the boy caught at the dirty limp hand of the dead man and kissed it.

"He swayed and leaned against a wall," continued the boy. "Then out of the darkness came the sound of strange music—your music. My lord smiled. It was his last smile. He seemed to know that you, his friend, were here. Painfully he staggered along the street and came to your doorway. The rest you know."

"The rest I know," repeated Red Rodgers sadly, gazing at his dead comrade.

He crossed the room, drew aside a curtain, and revealed a cunningly concealed telephone. In a few moments he was speaking, in English. The boy watched him, wonderingly.

"Yes, a bad business, Chief," the Intelligence was saying. "Knifed, less than a hundred yards away. He died in my arms, ten minutes ago."

"I'll come at once," said the voice.

Rodgers replaced the telephone. Except for a whispered muttering from the boy Abdul, who was repeating from the Koran the prayers to the dead, a strange silence enfolded those clay walls which had previously resounded to the music of Bach.

And Rodgers himself squatted on a cushion, a Bible in his lap. He was reading the Book of Kings:

And when the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.

And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold and precious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. . . .

He was still reading when, half an hour later, there was the crunch of sand beneath boots, and the curtain was thrust aside to admit Major Stoddard, Chief of the Aden Intelligence.

"**A**SERIOUS business," agreed Sir John Robbins, the Resident of Aden, staring at a pathetic group of relics on his desk. They included a belt, an empty pouch and a crumpled packet of three cigarettes. "This is all that was found upon the body of poor Tomlinson?"

"That's all, sir," replied Major Stoddard briefly.

"If he had been carrying any papers, sir," interposed Paul Rodgers, who was also in the spacious room of the Residency, "they must have been taken by the Arabs who knifed him. That is, if they *were* Arabs," he added quietly.

"What d'you mean?" asked the Resident.

Rodgers gave an imperceptible shrug. "I examined that wound on poor Tomlinson pretty closely," he drawled. "The Arabs use a curved knife. Tomlinson's wound was caused by a straight, stiletto instrument, such as Galla men from Abyssinia carry."

"Go on," nodded the Resident. "Did you observe anything else?"

"Several things," said Rodgers. "A smell, for example."

"A smell!"

"Yes, the smell of Africa. Easy enough to distinguish on this side of the Red Sea, at the end of Arabia. I would say that Tomlinson had lately come over from the African side, and in a dhow too, with other Africans. . . . And then, of course, there was his cryptic remark to me just before he died: '*The Queen of Sheba is here.*' Well, I think I can guess the rest. He's been on the Abyssinian affair, eh?"

SOMETHING like a grim smile crossed the Resident's face.

"You fellows who are in this work are not so blind as we who send you forth sometimes imagine," he said. He turned to the Chief of Police. "Better explain everything, Stoddard. Our friend Rodgers may as well know the odds if he is prepared to gamble."

The Major nodded.

"Quite so, sir. It's only fair to tell Rodgers that Tomlinson is the third man who has failed in this Abyssinian affair."

"No, he didn't fail," insisted Rodgers. "He passed on useful information."

The Major made a despairing gesture.

"It may be so. But facts, real facts, are what none of those three men ever brought back. I can only imagine that Tomlinson was delirious when he babbled of the Queen of Sheba. Of course, we all know that the Abyssinian rulers claim descent from that historic meeting of Sheba and Solomon—"

"We'll leave the history, Stoddard," said the Resident a little impatiently.

"Yes sir. . . . Briefly, Rodgers, things are happening in Abyssinia—things we don't know anything about. There have been frontier fights with Italians and British patrols on the Somaliland border. And the diplomats in Rome, Paris and London are getting agitated. Mussolini threatens to send a punitive force into Abyssinia, unless the raids cease."

"And I'm deluged with messages from the Foreign Office asking for information," growled Sir John Robbins.

"All of which is contemporary history," said Red Rodgers.

"Quite so—quite so," retorted the Resident sharply. "It's getting into every damned cheap newspaper."

Major Stoddard took up the tale.

"Tomlinson was the third man we had sent into Abyssinia in search of informa-

tion," he said. "I was not aware that he was back in Aden. He didn't report at Intelligence. According to that Arab boy Abdul, he called upon him in the bazaar,—he always had a fondness for that boy,—and together they went and sat on the beach."

"To gaze upon the old dhow of the Queen of Sheba," murmured Red Rodgers.

"A sheer waste of time," growled the Chief of Intelligence. "If he had any information, it was his duty to report to me at once in Aden. As it was, the poor devil paid for it with his life."

"And the other two men?" asked Rodgers.

MAJOR STODDARD turned his face away from the light.

"Conway was found insane and dying in the desert by a British patrol in Somaliland. He was blind, had suffered torture, and had been turned loose into the desert to die. The poor devil died within ten minutes of being found."

"And told nothing?"

"He had no tongue," replied Stoddard bluntly.

There was silence for a moment.



JOHN F.
CLYMER

"What of Webster Smith?" asked Rodgers.

Both men turned upon him in astonishment.

"How did you know Webster Smith had been sent out to Abyssinia?" asked the Resident.

"One hears these things in the course of his work, sir," he said.

"All that we know of Webster Smith," said Stoddard, "is that he was shipped with a cargo of slaves in a dhow from a Red Sea port. Since then, we've heard nothing."

"But I have," said Red Rodgers somberly. "He was landed in Arabia, and taken to the slave-market at Mecca. There he was sold to a brute of an Arab for ten pounds. He was taken into the desert. His spirit was broken. He was beaten to death. That's the saga of Webster Smith, if you want to know."

There was a rising bitterness in his voice. The Red Wolf of Arabia could never conceal it in dealing with officialdom. They were often too engrossed with their facts, their card-indexes, and their pretty political maps to consider the fine mettle of the men broken in the service of their country in this thankless Intelligence work.

"Where did you hear that, Rodgers?" asked the Resident.

"From the desert, sir," replied the Red Wolf. "I have friends there who bring me news. And enemies as well," he added thoughtfully.

"So now you realize what you're up against, Rodgers," said Major Stoddard. "We need that information from Abyssinia badly. Something strange is going on there, something that might easily lead to a big war. We've got to know what it is. Are you ready to go?"

"Of course," nodded Rodgers, as mechanically as some people accept an invitation to dinner. "I have a desire to get my fingers on the throat of that damned Galla who knifed Tomlinson," he added quietly.

The Resident walked across the spacious room to his desk where a survey map of the Red Sea regions was spread.

"I heard a choking cry; I turned. Those sleepers had risen—they attacked my master from behind."

He placed a well-manicured finger-nail on the area of Abyssinia.

"The most dangerous spot on the map of Africa today," he pronounced. "It's got to quiet down and—"

He stopped. The door of the room had opened. A well-dressed A.D.C. in carefully tailored whites had strolled in, a sheet of paper in his hand.

"I told you, Willoughby, that I was not to be disturbed," snapped the Resident.

The A.D.C., an engaging, well-bred smile on his face, squeaked an apology.

"Sorry, sir. But it's imperative that you approve this list of invitations to the ball at the Residency tonight. An important social matter, sir."

Major Stoddard turned his back upon the A.D.C.

"A ball!" he muttered. "What the devil next!"

But the Resident had already taken up a dutiful pen.

"Quite so, Willoughby," he murmured. "This is the final list, eh?"

The A.D.C. nodded.

"I've taken the liberty of adding the name of Sari Mansur to the list," squeaked Willoughby. "The lady has arrived in Aden. She made a formal call at the Residency yesterday."

"The richest woman in Africa," sighed the Resident. "And is she as beautiful as reports say, Willoughby?"

"Even more so," replied the A.D.C. enthusiastically. "She's a peach, sir."

The Resident chuckled.

"Well, don't monopolize her too much in the dancing. I can still waltz, you know."

And he scrawled his signature at the bottom of the list.

As soon as the immaculately dressed and straw-haired A.D.C. had strolled out of the room, the Resident turned again to the two men.

"You accept, Rodgers?"

"Yes sir."

"I can arrange for a sloop to carry you across the Red Sea tonight," suggested Major Stoddard.

Rodgers shook his head.

"If you don't mind, sir," he said to the Resident, "I would like to begin this ad-



venture where poor Tomlinson ended his—in Aden."

"The matter is devilish urgent," said the Resident.

Rodgers nodded.

"I realize that, sir. And for that reason I'm venturing to trespass upon your hospitality further. May I have an invitation to the ball tonight?"

The request took away the breath of the already bewildered Chief of Intelligence.

"Of course, Rodgers," nodded the Resident, nevertheless raising his eyes in surprise. "May I ask the reason?"

Paul Rodgers smiled and reached for his sun-helmet.

"I also am rather anxious to dance with the beautiful Sari Mansur," he said. "Good morning, sir."

And he walked out of the room, leaving the two men staring at each other. . . .

As the Red Wolf left the Residency, an Arab boy rose from a squatting position in the dust and sunshine, and shuffled after the white man. There was a dog-like adoration in the liquid eyes.

It was Abdul following his new lord.

THE richest woman in Africa," repeated Captain Willoughby, A.D.C., to the Resident, as he stood upon the edge of the dance-floor and watched the slim form of Sari Mansur dancing in the arms of Paul Rodgers.

"You sound envious," said Major Stoddard, resplendent in mess uniform.

"I am envious," sighed the A.D.C. "Rodgers has monopolized that woman throughout the evening. Even Sir John hasn't had five minutes with her."

"Where does her money come from?" asked the practical Stoddard. He hummed lightly to himself as the Air Force band played a lilting waltz.

"Oh, mines in Abyssinia—gold or platinum—probably both," replied Willoughby vaguely. "You've heard the story of the lost mines of Sheba? Well, Sari Mansur is a land-owner in that part of Abyssinia where the mines are said to be located. What is more, Sari Mansur claims to be directly descended from the Queen of Sheba."

"The Queen of Sheba!" exclaimed Stoddard. "Gad, she looks it!"

With her dark, glossy hair stretched tightly over her head, and coiled richly at the nape of her neck, Sari Mansur had something of an Old Testament voluptuousness. Her skin had the delicate

brown sheen of a pure-blooded Galla woman. But this, and her dark, flashing eyes, were all that betrayed the Africa. Her yellow evening frock, daring in color and cut, had the stamp of the Rue de la Paix in its lines. She wore jewelry sparingly, but such as there was had a unique quality.

EVEN the Queen of Sheba dancing before Solomon could not have excelled you in grace," murmured Rodgers as the waltz drifted dreamily to an end.

Sari Mansur's lips parted in a smile. "The Queen of Sheba danced for a reason."

"And that was?"

"To captivate Solomon, to make him fall in love with her."

"And Solomon succumbed," nodded Rodgers.

Languorously she waved her large yellow ostrich-feather fan.

"Let us go into the garden," she said quietly. "I am told that it is beautiful in the moonlight."

Rodgers drew aside a curtain. They passed through a French window into a velvet darkness shot with the strange tropical scents. Easily he slipped his hand beneath her arm. Her own hand came up enticingly to meet his.

He looked down at the slender wrist. A thin gold chain clamped with a curious clasp glittered in the moonlight. He raised her hand to press his lips against it, but his eyes narrowed their gaze upon the bracelet.

"A curious bracelet for a woman to wear," he said, touching it with his finger.

"Why curious?" she asked, withdrawing her hand suddenly.

He laughed.

"Because it is the least valuable piece of jewelry you are wearing."

"It might be the most valuable," she said.

"It might," he nodded. "For if I am not mistaken, it was a gift from a man."

"Yes? Go on!"

"And that man died last night in my house. His name was Tomlinson."

The lissome figure in the yellow evening gown swayed. The next moment she had recovered herself.

"I think your imaginings are apt to be dangerous, perhaps silly at moments, Paul Rodgers. Who is this man Tomlinson? How could this gold chain possibly belong to him?"

"Because I have seen it on his arm several times," said Red Rodgers. "Even

when we went swimming, he wore it. He wore it when he disguised himself and went as an Arab into the heart of Abyssinia. Last night, when I collected the few pathetic relics of the dead man, I noticed that it was missing. And he would not easily part with it. That gold chain is a family heirloom. It was given to Tomlinson by his mother."

They had approached the extreme edge of the garden of the Residency. They stood facing each other, shadowed by a sprouting ground palm. Below them, the built-up wall of the Residency grounds dropped to a narrow road. Beyond lay the Indian Ocean, silvered in moonlight, a smoothly shining sheet of chromium.

"Let us not talk of dead men," shivered Sari Mansur. "I have been dancing in your arms. You have stirred me as I never imagined a man could ever again affect me. This moment is for love.... You, and I—"

Her slim arms went without hesitation about his neck and drew him toward her. Paul Rodgers glimpsed the expectant parted lips, the gleam of her dark eyes. But in that moment his brain was cold and passionless. His eyes saw again the choking figure of Tomlinson sprawling across the piano. And on that brown arm that coiled about him was the gold chain which Tomlinson valued as his life.

Rodgers shuddered, and moved a step backward. But the arms of Sari Mansur tightened. They suddenly became as steel. And the misty gleam in her eyes changed to something which mocked him. Even as he stretched out his own hands to tear the jeweled fingers away, there came a sudden blow, lights danced before his eyes, and a wave of darkness swept over him....

"Be careful, you fools!" whispered the woman in Arabic to the two half-naked figures that had crept from the shadow of the palms. "Are the others below?"

A low whistle from the darkness of the road answered her. Quickly the limp figure of Red Rodgers was raised and dropped. Outstretched brown hands caught him. Then, after a low obeisance to the woman, the two burly figures vaulted after their captive.

FIVE minutes later Sari Mansur entered the ballroom of the Residency, fanning herself languorously. . . . The A.D.C. spied her and hurried forward.

"Surely that fellow Rodgers has not

monopolized you for this dance?" he pleaded.

She gave him a dazzling smile.

"Even if he had, the dance would be yours," she said.

"Didn't he take you into the garden?" smiled Willoughby. "A dangerous place in the moonlight."

She nodded.

"Very dangerous. But Paul Rodgers left me there. He said he had work to do. Tiresome, isn't it?"

And she stretched out her arms toward the radiant A.D.C.

WHEN Red Rodgers blinked himself awake with a sickening pain in his head, he realized that his acute instinct had led him to blunder into the very middle of the mystery.

"The Queen of Sheba is in Aden—" Tomlinson had babbled before he died.

That could only mean Sari Mansur, the wealthy woman from Abyssinia. Yet what part was she playing in the secret happenings across the Red Sea now perturbing the diplomats in Rome, Paris and London? And why was he, the Red Wolf of Arabia, permitted to be alive to ponder the problem?

Not that he felt exhilaratingly alive! With aching head he peered about in the darkness in which he lay. A faint shaft of sunlight which came through a barred window high against the wall told him that he was in some sort of cellar. He tried to caress his bruised head with his hand, but he was unable to move. Wrists and ankles were chained to the floor. He was lying spread-eagled.

There was the noise of bolts being withdrawn. A white, ghostlike figure seemed to be gliding down from the ceiling toward him. It was a few seconds before he realized that the vision was caused by the beautiful Sari Mansur, dressed in a thin white frock, stepping delicately down a flight of mud steps toward him. Her French high-heeled shoe touched him.

"So you are recovering, Paul Rodgers, from our unfortunate meeting in the Residency garden last night," she nodded.

Rodgers found his voice, thin and cracked.

"I cannot say that I altogether appreciate your hospitality," he replied. "Am I considered so dangerous that I must be trussed in this fashion, like a slave?"

"You are very dangerous," she went on calmly. "But at the same time you can be very useful. In the ordinary way, I

should have disposed of you without a second thought—”

“As you disposed of Conway, Webster Smith and—Tomlinson, eh?” hinted Rodgers.

Sari Mansur’s face set grimly.

“I am gambling for a kingdom. I cannot allow a few miserable white men to deter me from my goal.”

“Gambling for a kingdom,” mused Rodgers, looking up at that set face. “So the Queen of Sheba would be Queen again!”

“Exactly,” she nodded.

“And why am I permitted to learn this?” he asked.

She was equally calm.

“Because you are to help me win that kingdom,” she said.

And once again she appraised him with her dark eyes as she would a beast for sale in the marketplace.

“I suppose you offered the same dubious adventure to the others?” he said.

“Yes, and they refused.” Her voice was harsh.

“And why should you imagine that I am different?”

Her face came nearer. The swarthy skin seemed to be burning.

“Because you are more a man, more akin to these peoples of the Red Sea than any of the others. You can live among Arabs, rule them, be a leader in whom they delight. Men, lesser men, will follow you to the death. And yet for the moment you choose to be a miserable cipher in the Intelligence Service! I offer you a kingdom to share with me in Africa. You can become as great as Prester John, as powerful as—”

“I would be a fool,” said Red Rodgers bluntly. “My answer is the same as the others.”

SHE drew in her breath sharply, and gazed fixedly at him.

“You know what happened to them?” she said quietly.

“They died—like gentlemen,” he replied.

“Like dogs!” she cried out furiously. “Whipped, tortured curs!” She came even closer to the prostrate man. “Let me tell you that the tortures suffered by those men are nothing compared to the excruciating delights I can command in this old villa in Aden. You will agree to work with me, my friend—else you will discover that Abyssinians are as well versed in the arts of torture as the Arabs. In the meantime you will have two hours

in which to make up your mind. I have to play hostess to that silly puppet of an A.D.C., who insists upon visiting me this morning. He flirted outrageously with me last night after you left so abruptly. I hope to find you in a better mood on my return—and to move you from these slave quarters to an atmosphere more in keeping with the man who will help me rule Abyssinia.”

She clapped her hands. Again the door opened, and a powerful Sudanese appeared. He held a strip of cloth in his hand. Quickly and brutally he gagged the prostrate white man.

“You will be able to hear our chatter over the teacups,” smiled Sari Mansur. “The veranda is just above your barred window.”

And with a parting nod the white-frocked figure seemed to float upward in the darkness.

AS the door closed, Red Rodgers heard the crunch of boots in the sand and gravel beyond his window. By twisting his head, he could see a few inches of the path now bathed in sunshine. And a pair of elegant, highly polished riding-boots strode past. Groaning within, Red Rodgers recognized them. Only the distinguished Willoughby, A.D.C. to the Resident, would wear such boots.

He could hear the A.D.C.’s high-pitched foolish laugh.

“Jove! But you look really delightful this morning, Sari.”

“Flatterer!” she laughed in return. Once again, the clap of her hands. “I thought we might have tea on the veranda this morning. Such a beautiful morning, isn’t it?”

“Good to be alive, and all that,” laughed the A.D.C. “But there’s something better—having you in my arms while a dreamy waltz is being played.”

“You’re in a highly sentimental mood this morning, Captain,” said Sari Mansur. “Is it to be Indian or China tea?”

“China,” squeaked Willoughby, and sighed with the content of a man who is enjoying himself.

The prattle of conversation continued.

Desperately Paul Rodgers twisted his head in an endeavor to free himself from the suffocating gag. His body was bathed in sweat from his struggles with the chains that clamped him to the ground. But it was all in vain. . . .

An hour passed. There was the scrape of a cane chair on the veranda.

“Then you promise faithfully to go for

a drive with me this evening?" An ecstatic note was in Willoughby's voice.

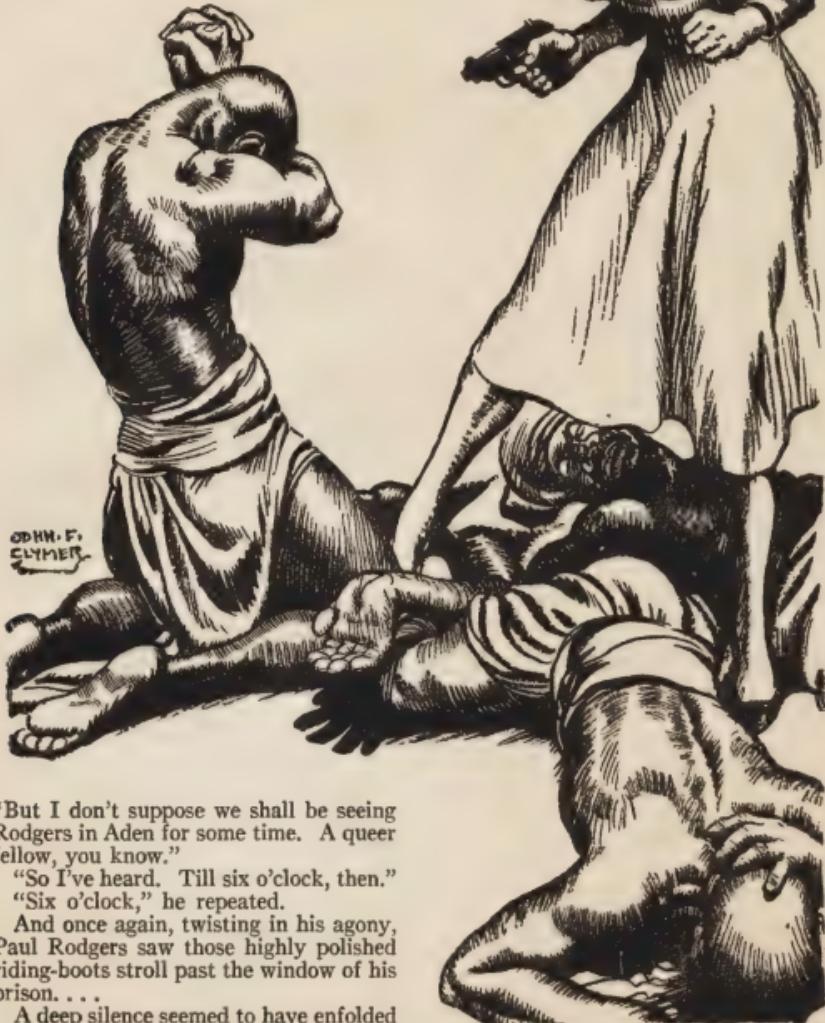
"I shall be delighted," she replied. "Shall we say six o'clock?"

"I'll be here on the dot."

He had shuffled to his feet.

"Oh, and by the way, Captain, if you should see Paul Rodgers, say how sorry I was that he had to leave so abruptly last night."

"I won't forget," chuckled the A.D.C.



"But I don't suppose we shall be seeing Rodgers in Aden for some time. A queer fellow, you know."

"So I've heard. Till six o'clock, then."

"Six o'clock," he repeated.

And once again, twisting in his agony, Paul Rodgers saw those highly polished riding-boots stroll past the window of his prison. . . .

A deep silence seemed to have enfolded the villa. To Red Rodgers, it was a sinister silence. It boded preparations by this determined woman, this modern Queen of Sheba. She was thoroughly ruthless, and—

"Another white man came, a fiend," groaned the negro. "We had no chance—" Without reply, Sari Mansur pointed her pistol at the quivering black body, and fired.

A scratching sound caused him to twitch at his bonds. He fixed his gaze upon the door, awaiting the entry of that powerful black Sudanese. But the door remained closed, though the scratching sound continued.

Once again, Rodgers twisted his head in the direction of the barred window. The shaft of sunlight had been broken. A face, a dark face with liquid eyes, was peering in between the bars. Accustomed as he was to the darkness, Red Rodgers recognized him. It was the Arab boy Abdul, the faithful follower of Tomlinson.

Desperately, Rodgers tried to speak, but the gag prevented him. And all the time that boy's face, a helpless expression on it, stared in at the window. It was doubtful whether Abdul could see into that darkness. And so securely trussed was the Intelligence officer that he could not even make a sound to provoke the attention of the boy.

It seemed only a matter of seconds before the boy's face was withdrawn. Once again the shaft of sunlight broke through. There was the scurry of naked feet, a shrill angry call, and once again silence. With despair in his heart, Rodgers sank back limp and exhausted.

MAJOR STODDARD, with three Sikh policemen, stepped onto that sunlit veranda. He confronted a fragile-looking woman in a thin white frock. Sidling close to the Chief of the Aden Intelligence was an Arab boy whose liquid eyes gleamed in a frightened manner.

"I am sorry to appear in this fashion," Major Stoddard growled, "but this boy Abdul claims to have seen a white man lying trussed in the cellar of your villa."

Sari Mansur opened wide her dark eyes.

"But how absurd, Major!" she protested. "What should I be doing with a white man in my cellar?"

Major Stoddard nodded.

"I quite agree it sounds fantastic. Nevertheless I must insist upon searching the villa."

"Of course," nodded Sari Mansur. "And perhaps when you've finished, you'll honor me by staying for tiffin?"

"I'm afraid that's impossible. . . . May I begin with the cellar?"

"I'll lead the way," smiled the woman. "I've never had the courage to go into that cellar myself. I believe it is the place where the Arab who once owned this house dealt with slaves in the usual

barbaric manner. Here it is. The door is unlocked. Be careful of the steps, Major."

The Arab boy still clinging to him, and the three Sikhs bringing up the rear, Major Stoddard descended the clay steps into that cellar of dank darkness. It was empty. In the middle of the rocky floor were embedded chains and clamps. They lay rusty and loose.

"Horrible, aren't they?" shivered Sari Mansur. "This is where the slaves were brought and whipped."

THE boy Abdul, gabbling in Arabic, pointed to a barred window against the wall.

"He says it is from that window he looked down and saw the white man stretched on this floor," murmured Major Stoddard.

Sari Mansur shrugged her shapely shoulders.

"Arab boys have vivid imaginations, Major," she replied. "How do you imagine he could see down into this horrible darkness?"

"Oh, they have eyes like cats," said the Major. Nevertheless he seemed frankly puzzled. He satisfied himself that there was no captive hidden away in the darkness. "Just to make certain," he growled, "I think we had better see the rest of the house."

"Naturally," smiled Sari Mansur. "You shall even see my bedroom, Major—a privilege, I assure you."

There was a mocking sureness in her tone that made the Chief of the Intelligence Service feel even more uncomfortable. For once, he felt like a blundering policeman. He glowered down at the unfortunate Abdul, and climbed out of the cellar, followed by the three Sikhs.

Nevertheless, Stoddard did his job thoroughly. He examined every room in that villa overlooking the Indian Ocean, and finally made his way out to a piece of sandy waste-land at the back.

"The servants' quarters," said Sari Mansur, indicating a series of mud outhouses.

Stoddard insisted upon plunging into those dark smelly interiors, where Arab men and women huddled in the darkness. Only at one outhouse did he hesitate. A miserable figure swathed in dirty white garb was squatting there.

"Unclean—unclean, Lord," babbled this figure, holding out the stump of an arm.

"He is a leper—dying," said Sari Man-

sur quietly. "I have allowed him to stay here. Will you go inside, Major?"

"Thank you," said the Chief of the Aden Intelligence, "but I think that will do." He stared round at this square piece of waste-land, with its surrounding mud wall. He had seen everything. "I think we'll go back to the villa."

"As you will," smiled the woman in the white frock. "I'm sorry your search has been unsuccessful."

"I'm not," said Stoddard, a smile breaking out upon his stern face. "I should have hated to find such a pretty woman involved in political intrigue."

"I hate politics," said Sari Mansur simply.

It was not long before Major Stoddard took his departure. The Arab boy, silent and subdued, kept close to the white man's side. Only when Sari Mansur had seen them climb into a motorcar and watched the dust of their departure did she clap her hands once again.

The powerful Sudanese appeared.

"The warning was timely," she said in Arabic. "Give this bag of thalers to the Sikh who sent the news."

And she tossed a clinking bag of coins into the outstretched palms of the native.

Then swiftly she proceeded through the villa back to that piece of waste-land. She crossed the sunshine-dusted ground to the outhouse where the leper had squatted not fifteen minutes previously. The leper was no longer there.

She gave a mutter of annoyance. Without hesitation she entered the filthy mud house. For a moment the transition from bright sunlight blinded her. Then she made out three African negroes lying on the ground.

One was dead, shot in the stomach. Another was lying senseless in a corner. A third lay doubled up, groaning loudly.

IN a fury the woman strode toward the groaning one and kicked him so that he faced her.

"Where is the white captive whom you had here, bound and trussed?" She demanded.

Still groaning, the negro pointed to the wall surrounding the waste-land.

"But how could he escape?" shrieked Sari Mansur. "He was bound and—"

"Another white man came, a fiend," groaned the negro. "He fell upon us like a thousand desert devils. We had no chance, and—"

The negro scrambled hysterically to his knees. From some hidden fold in

her filthy frock Sari Mansur had drawn an automatic pistol. Without reply, she pointed it at the quivering black body and fired. The thick mud walls suffocated the sound. . .

A few seconds later she was back in the villa. She snapped out orders in different dialects to the scurrying natives. Like men possessed, they scurried about the rooms. A car purred outside. Within ten minutes Sari Mansur was seated in it. It lurched away in a cloud of dust.

As the sun came swinging over that dusty town in a crater, a powerful cruising motor-boat sped out of the bay toward the Red Sea. The bumping prow was pointed toward Africa. The creamy wake told of the Queen of Sheba escaping in her modern dhow.

AND there, for the present, we must leave Sari Mansur," murmured Red Rodgers as he stood at a window of the Residency, watching that motor cruiser plunging towards the African coast.

"I can get a sloop or an airplane after her in a few minutes, Rodgers," urged the Resident, Sir John Robbins.

Paul Rodgers shook his head.

"She'll be more dangerous in jail here, than in Abyssinia," he said. "Her plans are prepared. Within two months an attack will be launched upon the Italian outposts in Somaliland. It will be a definitely prepared incident. Mussolini will have no option but to order an advance into Abyssinia. It will mean a bloody and protracted war."

"But of what advantage is that to Sari Mansur?" asked the Resident.

"It will bring a modern European army against her most hated enemy, the present Emperor of Abyssinia, Ras Tafari. Sari Mansur, who is gambling for the throne herself, wants to see Ras Tafari overthrown. She is not powerful enough to achieve that herself. She hopes that the Italians will do it."

"And if they do?"

"Then Sari Mansur will rally the remnants of the Abyssinian army to her own flag. She will begin a guerrilla campaign against the Italians. And for anyone who knows those blue highlands, those mountainous regions with its narrow defiles, the success of such a campaign is almost certain. The Italians will withdraw. And Sari Mansur, claiming descent from the Queen of Sheba, will be crowned Queen of Ethiopia."

"Damned clever; but perhaps too ambitious," was the Resident's comment.

"But she's capable of achieving it," said the Red Wolf of Arabia, "unless—" "Unless?"

"I'm going over to Africa tonight," said Rodgers quietly.

Both men looked up. The A.D.C. Captain Willoughby had just entered the room. He looked excessively spick and span as he brushed imaginary dust from the lapels of his white evening jacket.

"Thank goodness for a bath," he squeaked thankfully. Rodgers walked over to him, holding out his hand.

"I want to thank you again, Willoughby," he said, "for the way you laid out those three negroes in the outhouse."

The A.D.C. grinned foolishly.

"Rather unsporting methods, and all that," he laughed. "Had to shoot one and kick the other in the stomach."

"And laid out a third with a knock-out to the jaw," added Rodgers. "Great work, Willoughby! I never thought you had it in you."

"A disgusting brawl," was the A.D.C.'s comment. "I wouldn't have done it if that dirty little Arab boy hadn't come after me when I left the villa, and insisted that you were lying there trussed up in the cellar."

"And what did you do, Willoughby?" asked the Resident with a smile.

"Decided to make my way over the wall at the back, sir," murmured the A.D.C. "I was just about to climb over when I saw them hurrying our gagged and bound friend into one of those huts. I just watched and waited. That wasteland seemed full of people. I guessed the Arab boy had reached Major Stoddard's office, as I ordered him."

"Well, to cut a long story short, it was at least an hour later before I dared show myself over that wall again. I didn't know that Stoddard had already searched the place. I shinned over the wall, passed into the hut—and just went berserk."

"And a few seconds later I was loose and being pushed over the wall," nodded Rodgers. "Thanks again, Willoughby. It was thoughtful of you, too, to go to morning tea with a gun in your pocket."

"One never knows what is going to happen in this damned town," murmured the A.D.C.

At that moment a clock in the room tinkled six o'clock. Captain Willoughby started, and then sighed. "It's going to be a dull evening," he said.

Another fascinating story of the Wolf of Arabia will appear in an early issue.

Thrown

*W*HEREIN bank bandits attempt a novel get-away—and an army lieutenant throws a girl out of a balloon.

SECOND LIEUTENANT WILLIAM BRENT stared disconsolately out the window of his room in the Post Inn. A dreary summer rain dribbled from a sky gray with low clouds. Already, at seven o'clock in the morning, the air was a hot and sticky vapor that clung to the broad Mississippi Delta country with the same muggishness that had persisted for three days—ever since Brent and Sanders had arrived. The earth was wet. The town of Tallorah was silent but for the drip of eaves and the occasional squidding of bare negro feet in street mud somewhere below. Aggravated almost beyond endurance, Brent looked out upon the scene and shook his head.

"Spores!" he snorted in disgust. "Bugs and fungi on a glass slide! Boll weevil and *ozonium* and *colletotrichum gossypii* and a couple of pains in the neck! And I had to get hooked for this detail!"

First Lieutenant Gene Sanders, sleeping raw and perspiring beneath his sheet, rolled over with a muffled expression of his opinion of being wakened at this time of morning; and at last, rubbing his eyes, sat up. He was a short, rotund man with a round head gradually losing its supply of wiry Airedale-colored hair. The sheet fell down somewhat, revealing a fat pink stomach and a pair of amazingly broad shoulders. He yawned, and then, deliberately, he asked:

"So you don't like this detail, eh?"

The effect was startling. Brent, lithe and lean and angry, whirled so quickly from the window that his uncombed black hair fell down across his eyes. He shouted: "For five days I've been trying to get that idea across to your thick brain!" He paused, and watching Sanders' twinkling blue eyes, challenged with a sudden chill suspicion: "By any chance did you have a hand in getting me assigned?"

Sanders grinned. He swung his feet out to the floor, and stretched and

Overboard

By LELAND
JAMIESON

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson



down here a month, I'll go back and find Philippa dated up to marry Don Gray. You can't go off and neglect a girl you're courting, dammit, Gene!" With a distracted entwining of his fingers in his hair, he came over and stood glaring down at his superior.

"It would appear," Sanders grinned placidly, "that you're actually in love—and yet I can't believe it. Old Colonel Schallen has been the commanding officer of Scott for just five weeks, and Philippa has been home from school ten days—and you pronounce yourself in love! Have you a little fever, Bill?" He smirked with a cherubic malice. "Anyhow, we're down here, and when you get back to Scott, you'll thank me for getting you away. You can't afford a girl like Philippa, anyhow, my boy."

There was no chance—Bill Brent knew that. . . . But he launched a wild right at Lefty's jaw.

yawned again. With a kind of malicious enjoyment he asked: "So you suspect me, do you? Well, now, Bill, what would I have done down here alone?"

Brent emitted a faint squeak of baffled rage. "If there weren't a law," he threatened, "I'd choke you till your tongue got black!" And then, rather plaintively, he added: "Gene, you know the jam I'm in. I've got to get away from this detail! Quick! If I stay

THERE was silence for a moment, while Bill Brent struggled with a refractory boot. He had considered Gene Sanders his closest and most trusted friend until this moment; and the knowledge of Sanders' action came as something worse than treachery. It was treason, and it was tragedy. Philippa Schallen was a gloriously beautiful girl, to say nothing of being the seductive and glamorous daughter of the most colorful colonel in the Air Corps. Bill Brent was helplessly and hopelessly in love with her. He had to get back to her. Somehow, by one means or another, he had to get relieved from this muddy, boring detail in Tallorah. Silently he swore that he

was going to get relieved, if he had to wreck the winch—or something.

He got to his feet, attired now in light-weight shirt and breeches and foot-gear, stamped his heels a time or two to straighten out his toes, and glowered at Gene Sanders. "You damn' goat!" he muttered. "Always butting into something that isn't your affair. If you'd ever been in love, you'd understand, but you've got no feeling. You cold-blooded snake!"

"Snake—with this stomach?" Sanders countered genially, tentatively indicating that pink protuberance. "No, Bill, I've never been in love—thank God. . . . We'd better get out and see the weather map. But I don't think we can do much in the air this morning. Maybe we could get up another rummy game with some of these old cotton planters. Fifty dollars wasn't bad yesterday, hey, boy?" He dived under the shower, and, emitting a dozen lusty yells, came flapping wetly out again, toweling himself briskly as he strode back and forth before the window.

BELLOW, the town of Tallorah spread out, the houses standing serene and wet beneath scattered giant trees. The streets were lanes of rich black mud. Directly across from Inn was the Madison National Bank, and along the short length of Main Street were business houses, mercantile stores, and the post office. Tallorah was an active cotton center, wealthy, this year of 1925, almost beyond imagination. So wealthy and so politically important that the Government of the United States had recognized it formally.

The reason that Brent and Sanders had been sent here was that the cotton in this productive delta land was being destroyed more ruthlessly each season by boll weevil and other insect life. The pests were either breeding here, or migrating; and in either case, they must be eradicated. So this expedition was a bug-hunt on an enormous and rather unique scale. And they, as Brent had cryptically and angrily described them both, were the Big Bug Hunters. It was going to be a disgusting job, if you believed Bill Brent. And he, within these last five minutes, had decided that he would stoop to almost anything in order to escape.

Sanders, pacing back and forth before the window, suddenly paused and stared across the street, his dressing ar-

ested at the point of buttoning his shirt. Brent, lighting a cigarette, looked up and watched, and observed sarcastically: "I thought I knew something about dogs, but this is the first time I ever saw an Airedale point. You dirty double-crosser, you! What the devil do you see?"

Sanders only grunted mildly. Then, after fully thirty seconds had gone by in silence, Brent stepped forward and looked down, following the other's gaze.

Across the street was the bank; and standing in the doorway of the bank reading what appeared to be a letter, was a girl. She was unquestionably a pretty girl, what he could see of her oval face between a small blue hat and the wet upturned collar of her raincoat. She had trim ankles, and she was slender, and about his own height, possibly. And as she looked up, she was smiling! Smiling at him, he thought—until he saw the movement of Sanders' hand behind him.

He had been on the point of giving her a mock salute, but checked himself and said in a quick, almost unreasonable disappointment: "If you'd hurry up and get your pants on, you might get down there in time to introduce yourself."

"I have exactly those intentions," Sanders said, dressing hurriedly. "Boy, who do you suppose she is? I didn't think there was a gal like that in the whole State!"

The object of their scrutiny turned just then, and with a key produced from her purse, opened the front door of the bank and passed through, closing it behind her. It was long before the opening hour of the institution; it was not yet quite eight o'clock.

"Works there," Sanders ruminated. He pulled on his boots quickly, keeping up a running fire of deductive conversation meanwhile. Dressed at last, he patted his hip pockets, and ejaculated: "Just occurred to me, I need to cash a check! See you after while." And with that, he dived through the door, his footsteps growing fainter as he took the stairs two at a time.

IN exasperation and frustrated rage Brent went down to order breakfast. It was all right for Sanders to meet attractive women; but for himself, this detail would last an endless month, during which time, as the flying member of the pair, he would take off each morning at eight o'clock, in normal weather, and fly till four or five, operating the slides

in a bug trap and shouting orders to the winch operator to raise or lower the balloon.

If he could have flown one of the airplanes which droned across these dew-drenched bottom-lands at dawn each day, spewing white cords of poison dust upon the cotton crop, it would not have been so bad. But his task was a passive, boring one. Upon the edge of his balloon basket was a boxlike contrivance open at both ends; the interior of the box contained numerous glass slides coated with a sticky substance. All day the wind sighed through that box, bringing with it millions of destructive spores and half a hundred kinds of insects injurious to plant life, and depositing them upon the slides. Every evening entomologists analyzed the contents of the slides, and issued orders for the kind of poison to be sprayed by the growling morning planes.

So Brent's task was simply to stand there in the basket of the kite balloon, changing slides each time the altitude was varied. He was not interested in spores and bugs and cotton acreage. But, being loaned by the Army for the job, he must spend eight hours every day in the basket of that kite. Swaying and pitching when the wind rose high, riding stationary in a sultry calm at other times. . . . This prospect made him miserable. The memory of Philippa Schallen made him desperate. He had, he felt certain, lost her for all time.

SANDERS presently came back. They ate, then drove in the olive-drab Army car through mud and gravel out the road toward the balloon bedding-ground. On the way, Brent asked tentatively: "Well, was she married? Don't be a sphinx all day. The only fun I'll have in this town will be to see you get mixed up with something here."

"We're staying a month, but if this rain keeps up, it'll take two months—and that will suit me fine," Sanders said.

. . . "No, she's not married. She's the cashier of the bank, and she's the prettiest thing this side of the Galveston Pageant of Pulchritude. Name's Judith Garder. Apparently her old man's got a big plantation, and of course she doesn't have to work, but feels she's not much use in the world unless she's doing something. That attitude's unusual in this country. This afternoon I'm going to take her and her old man up so they can see their plantation from the air.

I've got a date with her tonight—and I'll admit I'm hooked. Hooked, and glad of it, Bill—and I never felt like this before!"

"You fool!" Bill Brent snapped. "You don't want to give this kid the rush. You're down here in the shotgun country now, and you'll have to marry her!"

Gene Sanders laughed; and he was nervous, Brent decided. His voice was different—unsteady; he was excited too. He said: "Maybe that would suit me, Bill! Had you ever thought of that?"

"No fool like an old fool," Bill Brent thought; but he expressed no further opinion on the matter then.

THEY came to the bedding-ground; here, like a great black grub, the balloon was lying on the ground, sandbagged against the fresh north wind. Surrounded by a trench that drained away the water which now streamed from the rounding sides, the craft had an elephantine look totally incongruous with aviation. Near by was the winch, a short and stubby truck with odds and ends of curious gear bulbous underneath a brown tarpaulin. On the other side was the crew tent, where the night sentry relief slept, and where the telephone switchboard was located temporarily. Underfoot was black, steamy, oozy mud. Overhead was the gray of a misting overcast, with jagged wisps of clouds that almost hugged the ground.

But the rain had stopped now. The wind had swung to the north or north-northwest, and the ceiling was definitely higher than an hour earlier. Sanders, squinting at it quizzically, declared: "Bill, we'll fly today, after all. Another hour, and we'll have a thousand feet, and the mist will have stopped—and up you go."

In an infinitely weary tone, Brent returned: "I'll admit that collecting a lot of bugs with personality intrigues me, but when are you going to take a crack at flying this big crock yourself? I know rank has privileges, but don't you think my feet get tired, standing in that basket for eight hours at a stretch?"

"The Lieutenant," Gene Sanders returned with a smirking grin, "will take that possibility under advisement. In the meantime, you fly today, until I come out this afternoon to take Judith and her father for a ride."

Brent snapped: "It's Judith now, eh? It may not have occurred to you that you'll be violating Army regulations on

that flight. You don't know, probably, that I could make it pretty tough for you. This is an old balloon, and it has Stevens parachutes—and only two—you know that. Three people in the basket, and something happens—and Lieutenant Sanders will be *Mister* Sanders if he's still alive. You'd better think about that, boy."

"I don't think there's a great possibility of danger," Sanders said. "And you wouldn't report me anyhow, you sour little bum!"

Bill Brent grinned. He said, "Aw, hell," in a tone of disgust, and turned from Sanders to the direction of the handling crew. "Bug-hunter," he mumbled. "If this isn't the sorriest detail I ever landed on, I'll eat the bugs I catch up there today!"

SANDERS, working in the tent on his reports, whistled in a tuneless obbligato. Brent, outside in the mist, got the balloon up until it was tugging at the handling-guys. He directed the crew in attaching the basket; he checked the valve- and rip-cords personally, and in twenty minutes was ready to ascend. It was now nine-thirty by his wrist-watch. The ceiling had gone up steadily during the preparation of the craft, until now there was at least five hundred feet. Within another hour it would be a thousand. As soon as Sanders could go down to the entomological office for the bug traps that would be attached to the basket rim, Brent could take off.

Sanders came out, his round face beaming. He said: "Be back in a few minutes. We've got to run thirty tests, and the sooner we get at 'em, the sooner you can get back to courting Philippa! How about it, Bill: you fly this crock mornings, and I'll take it three hours in the afternoons?"

"Suits me," Brent said, astonished for a moment that Sanders had agreed to fly at all. "But I'm telling you, Gene, it's potent medicine, taking women up in these giloppies. You want to watch your step."

Sanders laughed, "Can you imagine

any more secluded place than the basket of this crate at fifteen hundred feet?" and got into the car and splashed off toward the east.

Brent, in the basket ready to take off—the cleanest and the driest place which he could find—looked out across the fields that lay flat and level as far as he could see. The crew removed the final sandbags from the mooring harness, and the winch-operator tested his engine with a series of staccato ear-splitting accelerations. In the silence that followed that final blast of the exhaust, Brent heard the high whine of an automobile coming at a dizzy speed from the direction of Tallorah, and looked up to find the reason for such driving on a road made slippery and dangerous by rain.

A low black touring-car, top down, was careening and swaying down the highway, with another car in swift pursuit perhaps a hundred yards behind it. Brent, watching it, said: "Sergeant, has that guy gone crazy?"

"Probably a drunk, Lieutenant."

For a moment there was no change in the spacing of the two machines; and then a quick *rat-ta-ta-ta-tat* of an automatic rifle cracked murderously across the steaming flats. The rearmost car swerved violently, plunged from the road and turned over in a spray of muddy water in the ditch. The lead car came on unchecked.

Sergeant Weems cried, "Oh-oh! That baby's been up to something and he's out for blood!" and whirled down from his seat and started running toward the tent, to get an Army rifle.

But he had insufficient time for that. The car, brakes screaming, slithered to a stop almost beside the bedding-ground, no more than fifty feet away. The man in the rear seat was standing upright now, and his gun was swung upon the crew there, and he was snarling in a cold, ferocious voice: "Up with 'em! I'd just as soon bump off the crowd of you as bat an eye!"

Brent's impressions came in an interrupted flood that had no ordered se-





quence. He recognized Judith Garder in the front seat of the car beside the driver, but he felt no surprise in seeing her. That seemed natural enough; and yet somehow he wished that Sanders could have been here to see her as he himself was seeing her: a bloody streak across her forehead, and her pale, impassive face that held no fear in it, but rather a helpless, passionate defiance.

Things were moving quickly. The driver had the door open, and was stepping down into the mud. In the rear seat, the gunman was swinging his rifle back and forth, still snarling at them all to raise their hands.

At this command, a quick, pervading excitement swept Brent. He saw Sergeant Weems stop in his tracks and raise his arms. He heard a soldier holding to a handling-line of the balloon cry plaintively: "Don't shoot—don't shoot! We can't let go to raise our hands or this balloon will get away!"

The gunman laughed. It wasn't funny, but he laughed; and Brent could see that he was rushed for time and that he was nervous. The gun seemed pointed everywhere at once, and it occurred to Brent that a jumpy forefinger might press the trigger accidentally at any time. The driver's voice was harsh and nasal, cracking like a whip: "We just stuck up the bank back there. We're in for it. Got cut off on the west. We'll jump in

that balloon and you cut it loose with us."

Brent, hands in the air, watched and heard all this from the vantage-point of the basket, five feet higher than the ground. He saw the driver reach back and grip Judith Garder by the elbow and either force or help her from the car. She had a money-bag in each hand, and the driver had one stuck into his belt. He had a Luger pistol, and its snout was a yawning cavern to Brent's eyes even at this distance.

But for a moment he forgot the gun, thinking of the girl. She wasn't voluntarily involved in this, of course. She was a hostage, to prevent gunfire from pursuing forces of the law. And she was, doubtless, in danger of her life. He wondered what would happen to her, going on a flight like this with these two cut-throats. No telling where the craft would land, with this north wind. He shouted, thinking to save her the harrowing experience:

"You can take the balloon, of course. But remember, it hasn't any motive power. You can't go anywhere but up. You'd do better in a car. And don't forget—you're fooling with the Federal Government when you make me cut it loose for you. This is U. S. Army property."

THE rifleman had come forward and was prodding Sergeant Weems before him. He was a squat, stocky man. His face had a two-day growth of black beard stubble on it, and his little eyes were ice-blue with a dangerous and impatient light. He said in a quiet yet sibilant tone that carried to Brent's ears against the wind with a surprising force:

"That's enough from you, Shavetail! This wind'll blow us across the Mississippi, or *you'll* never see the sun go down. These low clouds will hide the direction we're drifting, won't it? Isn't this a real smart idea for a get-away?" He laughed mirthlessly. "Even have an Army pilot to get us over there!"

Brent swallowed heavily. He was going too, was he? Somehow he hadn't included that possibility in this scheme. There was no doubt about it in his



mind that these two hold-up men were killers, and that this gunman's threat was not an idle one. They wouldn't hesitate to shoot him and toss his body from the basket, if it seemed expedient. He shuddered faintly, and the wind seemed chill. If he had to climb above the clouds, he didn't know whether the wind would drift him east across the Mississippi. It might take him west, or straight south. And there would be no way on earth to find that out, aloft.

Yet he said: "Sure it will drift you over the river." He looked keenly at Judith Garder as she approached the soldiers who were ringed around the bedding-ground holding grimly to the handling-lines. A girl like that—she'd been through enough already. He warned: "You can't take more than three in this balloon—it won't get off the ground with that much weight. The girl, or one of you, will have to stay."

THE driver of the car was coming forward, pushing Judith a pace ahead of him. Brent could see he was in a hurry too, and that he was as dangerous-looking an individual as his squat companion. The driver slurred, replying to Brent's words: "Buddy, we aint foolin' with you—get that through your nut. We just bumped off a guy back there, and in two or three minutes a posse will be comin' down this road. Now, we don't want no shootin', with this broad here. By the time that posse gets close, if we aint in that basket and up in them clouds out of sight, you'll be a corpse—and don't think I'm kiddin' you. That would be right dreadful, wouldn't it? The broad goes, and that balloon had better get off, for your health!"

Bill Brent looked again at Judith Garder, and he wished there was something he could do. She was very pretty, standing there so quietly and so tensely watching him. He could tell that she was frightened, although you couldn't see it in her face. He could see it in her eyes, and he felt sorry for her suddenly, and very helpless. He thought: "If Gene would only come back now!" But it was really better that Gene stayed away, for he didn't have a gun, and he wouldn't have a chance. The thing was to figure out how to obey these gunmen's orders, and yet—somehow—defeat them in the end. He had to do that—and it just wasn't possible, that was all.

There was no time to think about it.

If the posse got here too soon— He called: "All right—climb up here. May-be the balloon can get off the ground with all of us. Sergeant, remove the junction-piece." The junction-piece was the shackle that tied the winch-cable to the holding-wires. He said: "All right, men, ease the basket down until these people can climb in."

Everyone was frightened, except those two with the guns. It required an incredibly short time to do it all. The tall bandit got in first, and reached down for the money that the shorter one forced Judith Garder to hand up to him. He helped her up, and she half fell over the basket-edge, and thrust out one slender hand against Brent's shoulder for support. In that moment, looking directly at him, Brent saw that she was terrified.

All the time the squat, piratical individual was standing down there in the mud holding a rifle on the crew. When the one in the basket was ready and had his Luger covering Brent and Judith and the men on the ground, the rifleman swung himself lithely across the wicker rim and clumped his muddy feet upon the rug.

"Get going!" he snapped. "Climb straight up into them clouds. Quick!"

Brent, feeling the muzzle of a gun against his spine, said a trifle shakily: "All right, Sergeant, release all lines."

NO one said anything after that for a long time. The crew, faces rigid in anxiety, dropped the handling-lines and stepped back and put their hands up. The balloon, loosed entirely, paused there for an instant as if uncertain of its ability to rise. Then, moving with the wind, it dragged across the road and suddenly seemed to leap skyward at a slanting angle on the wind. The nose raked upward, and the basket swung back toward the bottom fin. The hand-lines crawled through the mud and water of a drainage ditch and then swept clear.

The flat, water-soaked cotton-fields ringed out into a broad and shallow bowl as they went up. Overhead, the clouds seemed to press down, startlingly close and dark and wet, yet sharply lined against the horizon. There was wind up here, Brent saw; the balloon moved out across the country at surprising speed. Southeast. They were headed for the Mississippi, at this altitude, he realized gratefully.

At six hundred feet above the earth,

the visibility was all but unlimited through air washed clean by rain. Brent's hopes rose. If this wind held in the higher elevations, they could get across the river soon, and drop down for a landing; and perhaps he and Judith Garder would survive this ordeal after all. He wondered for a fleeting instant how a landing with this massive sausage could be made, alone and in the wetness of a cotton-field.

The tall gunman's voice slurred softly, warning, "Posse comin'! Kid, you git this outfit stuck up in them clouds! Quick!" He prodded Brent viciously with that murderous Luger muzzle.

BUT there was nothing Brent could do. The balloon was loaded with all it could carry, and it was rising slowly. There was no way to accelerate it. In another hundred feet or so they would be inside the clouds, but only time would put them there. Holding his voice level, he explained:

"We're going up as fast as possible right now. This isn't a high-powered airplane, you know."

"No lip!" snarled the shorter man. "You do what we tell you, see, or it'll be too bad."

Brent nodded, checking his protest. It was crowded and uncomfortable here in the basket. Four people, where two ordinarily rode. Brent stood in the forward right-hand corner, and the tall man was on his left, and Judith Garder was behind him, with the rifleman beside her. It was strange how the silence made the tension more acute, drawing his nerves taut almost to the breaking-point. There was utterly no sound—no sigh of wind or creak of rigging. The lines draped vertically around them, and they floated in a quiet that was ghoulish and complete. Unbearably anxious to hasten the ascent, Brent breathed a slow, long sigh when clouds enveloped them at seven hundred feet.

The streaking cars down there on the road were gone, blotted out behind a dank and chilly mist that reached in and pressed its lacy fingers on their faces. The gunmen relaxed a trifle, yet remained acutely in command. One of them said, "Now that was smart, Shavetail. You do what we tell you, and we may let you out of this alive."

Brent turned to him. There was no use in trying to deceive anybody. He replied: "The balloon got to the clouds as soon as it could climb that far. I had

nothing to do with it. You could have killed me, and it wouldn't have got there any quicker or any slower. There's not much you can do with this outfit. I'd rather you'd understand that—so you won't plug me for something I can't help."

They ignored him for a moment. Glancing back, he held Judith Garder's eyes for an instant, and her lips moved in a faint, almost imperceptible smile, as if in reassurance. Then the tall man was saying to his companion: "Lefty, we'd best git ourselves across the river and land on a road somewhere, and grab us the first automobile that comes along. Make Shavetail put us down a long way from a town. We can tie him and the skirt up in the brush, and they'll be there plenty long for us to scram."

Lefty rubbed a dirty thumb across his beard-stubble in a reflective gesture. It seemed to Brent that the time required for that deliberate decision would never reach an end, for he knew his life hung in the balance of it. Lefty was the commander of this pair, and he was heartless as a jellyfish, and just as cold. He said: "I guess that's all right for Shavetail, Joe, although it would be better if we bumped him off so he can't tell where we took the road and which way we went. But this gal—we'll take her along to shy off bullets." And he turned to Judith and studied her with a casual and yet very pointed interest.

"You'd do, girlie!" he said with a leer.

FOR the first time since the flight had started, as far as Brent knew, Judith Garder spoke. The clouds were a moist grayness all around, framing the outline of her head and slim shoulders. Her face flushed quickly and then went a kind of scared white, at Lefty's final words. Her lips were trembling. She said, emphasizing the third word, "You're a *foul beast*," in a hushed, violent tone, and looked straight at him, brown eyes flashing in defiance.

Joe laughed quickly in that soft voice of his, and the tension broke a little. Brent saw the muscles of Lefty's shoulders smooth out as he relaxed, and Lefty didn't say anything for a minute. The four of them rode there in the crowded basket, fear touching each one in a different way.

The altimeter was showing a thousand feet now, and Brent reached up and grabbed the valve-cord and held down on it a minute. The climb continued for a

while, and then the altimeter needle wavered and hung steady at twelve hundred feet.

They were still in the overcast, and it was thicker and darker than ever, at this elevation. Brent tried to study it, to figure which way the wind was blowing, here. He couldn't do that, naturally. He couldn't see a thing but dank, wet mist that brushed across the basket and through the rigging, leaving silver beads of moisture on each rope and line, and dampening the faces of them all.

But he tried to appear busy, to appear important. It was essential that these bandits feel dependent on him for their safety in the air, at least. He stood there holding to a basket stay, and tried to keep his mind from running rampant with speculation and imagination. It was ironical to think that he had been sent down here to catch bugs, a task so prosaic and so boring that he thought he couldn't stand it—and had run into an escapade that was as exciting as only foreseen and delayed death could be.



For he knew now, studying Lefty's sullen, crafty face in furtive glances, that Lefty planned to kill him. One more murder wouldn't make their crime more punishable; and they were not the kind to hesitate in such a thing because of squeamishness. He could see that, and he had to stifle a sensation of cold horror.

He thought of Philippa Schallen with a stab of poignant affection and regret. She was all any man would wish in the image of a woman, and she was now forever lost to him. Through his harried and fear-shriven mind crossed the thought of Gene Sanders and their long, enduring friendship. He wondered how his family would receive word of his demise. And he thought, perhaps a little frantically: "If I could only get back there and enjoy being bored with hunting bugs!"

The minutes dragged away, each one adding to the pyramiding tension and suspense. Brent thought of jerking out the rip-panel of the balloon and dropping the big bag into the Mississippi. But that would avail Judith Garder and himself nothing, for they would be caught there and would no doubt drown before they got ashore. They might not even get a chance to swim—for Joe and Lefty might turn guns upon them in retaliation for thus being thwarted. So that idea was out. He must think of something else, and do it quickly. . . .

And suddenly he remembered that on the sides and underneath the basket, folded carefully in their packs, were a pair of Stevens parachutes. If he and Judith Garder could somehow manage to jump out—

The idea started a succession of speculative possibilities, and it filled Bill Brent with a flushed and trembling, a violent, excitement. He thought wildly, "If I can work this—" and considered all the problems. Would Judith jump out with a 'chute, even if he managed to trick Joe and Lefty long enough to get the harness on her? At least there was

Brent heard a soldier holding a handling-line of the balloon cry: "Don't shoot! We can't let go to raise our hands or this balloon will get away!"

the advantage that a Stevens 'chute would open automatically when the weight of the jumper dragged it from its pack—there was no rip-cord to be pulled. But how could they get away and leave these bandits in the basket? What trick or subterfuge could he invent?

Straining tensely to keep his voice casual, his tone low, he asked: "How far should I go before I land you two? We should be across the river now."

Lefty and Joe exchanged a glance, and Lefty then looked speculatively and dispassionately at Brent. He spat a brown stream of tobacco-juice across the basket rim into the mist; and his icy-blue eyes were narrowed thoughtfully. He demanded: "Once you git down out of these clouds, can you climb back up again?"

With an appearance of detached deliberation, Brent returned: "No. Not this time. I haven't any ballast. But we've been out fifty minutes now, and the wind was fresh—seventeen or eighteen miles an hour on the ground. It will be stronger aloft. The river's only fourteen miles away, and I think we should be across it now."

"Think so?" Lefty said, and his voice had gone a little flat.

Brent nodded quickly. "Yes, I think so. Of course, I can't be sure, until we drop out of the clouds. But we're so far from Tallorah nobody could see the balloon from there—there's no danger of being followed, anyhow, across the swamps that lie along the river."

Lefty grunted: "I'll do all the thinking for this crowd, Shavetail. You're doing good enough at flying. I'll tell you when to start back down."

Brent turned back to look unseeingly into the clouds. It was hard to wait.

Every minute added to his feeling of hopeless, desperate nervousness. He had to get those harnesses on Judith and himself before the crisis came. And he had to do that without arousing anyone's suspicion.

"Lefty, when we do start down, I'm going to need some help. Have you ever flown in a balloon before?"

"Naw," Lefty retorted without interest. "Aint you supposed to be the pilot of one, kid?"

Brent nodded. "Sure," he said. "But this is a kite balloon—a captive balloon. You don't fly one ordinarily except tied on a cable. Landing it without killing everybody, when it's flying as a free balloon, is quite a trick." He paused on that suggestion, and studied the faces of the pair, watching their reactions.

Joe looked a little shocked. Lefty's face held a lurking suspicion and malevolence.

"Listen here, Shavetail," Lefty snarled, "you're up here with us, see. If there's anybody killed in landing, you'll be it!"

Smiling mirthlessly, Brent returned: "Naturally. But we'll be landing in a strange field. I'll have to stay here in the



The driver's voice was harsh, nasal: "We just stuck up the bank back there; we'll jump into that balloon and you cut loose with us." He gripped Judith Garder by an elbow and forced her from the car.

basket to valve the balloon down. Miss Garder, of course, knows nothing about flying. It will be necessary for you and Joe to put on the harness provided for that purpose, and lower yourselves on the maneuvering-lines some distance underneath the basket, to be ready to steer the balloon down the last few feet, when you're already on the ground. You understand?"

Joe cocked his head slightly on his long ungainly neck. "Now," he grated, "that would be just swell, wouldn't it? You git us hangin' on some ropes below the car—and then you cut the ropes, heh?" He laughed uproariously, and slapped Lefty vigorously upon the back. "Lefty," he exclaimed between guffaws, "Lefty, can you imagine how we'd look hangin' down there on the ropes? Imagine Shavetail thinkin' he'd git us in a place like that!"

LEFTY spat disdainfully into the mist. His eyes, when he turned to Brent, were narrowed dangerously. "Fast one, eh?" he sneered. "Going to try to kid us, were you, with a gag like that!" He wagged a stubby forefinger under Brent's nose, and his voice was chill. "You and the skirt put them harnesses on and slide down them ropes while we set up here and keep our rods on you. You show me what to yank, and tell me when to do it, see?"

"And when you once git on the ground," Joe added, "you just plant your feet and wait on us, or we'll plant you permanent right there."

Bill Brent exhaled slowly in vast secret elation. If he had tried to put the 'chute harness on in the beginning, Joe or Lefty would have stopped him instantly. Now that step was accomplished, and there was a bare chance to carry through the plan.

Of course, this was a gamble with two lives. Brent knew that, and the thought sobered him. He looked at Judith Garder, giving her a sharp, brief estimate. She was staring out into the mist, one arm crooked around a stay. She was pale, and her soft mouth was not so pretty when she compressed it the way it was now. Naturally he couldn't tell her what he meant to do. He'd have to get that harness on her, and then shove her overboard and let her 'chute perform the remainder of the task. But she was calm enough, and he was grateful; most girls would have been weeping in hysterics by this time.

He said: "Well, I'll get out the harnesses and we can put them on. Then you can tell us when to start down, Lefty . . . Miss Garder, do you think you can shin down a hundred-foot rope and not let go before you reach the ground? I mean, do you think you'll have strength enough for that?"

Judith Garder smiled at him, and her eyes were brown and very deep and very trusting. They made Bill Brent feel capable and strong and very clever, to have thought of this expedient. She said: "I'll try not to be afraid, Lieutenant."

He pulled the parachute harnesses from their pockets in the basket lining, and put one on Judith, bending down in front of her and buckling the straps. Then, working quickly, he climbed up into the rigging, standing on the suspension-bar and reaching up to the valve- and rip-cords. If Lefty and Joe knew what he was about, they'd slaughter him for this. Guarding the ropes with his body, keeping them out of the others' view, he cut part way through each of them—cut through enough so that a hard jerk on either one would break it at a point high up. To his surprise, neither Joe or Lefty even watched him as he performed the sabotage. Finally he climbed back into the basket.

Another thirty minutes passed in virtual silence, and at last Joe ejaculated:

"Lefty, we're driftin' south, you know—and the Gulf is down there somewhere close! We'd best git low and look around."

Lefty whistled softly. He said: "By God, I forgot about the Gulf! —All right, Shavetail, take us down!"

NOW was the time! Brent held his breath; he was shaking from excitement. He reached up and touched the valve-cord, and pulled down on it gently. His hands were sweating, and he felt almost light-headed from the pounding of his heart. He valved, and watched Judith's face, with quick, repeated glances at the altimeter and at the men. The needle dropped gradually to eleven hundred feet. Then to a thousand. Finally to nine hundred.

"I thought we'd see the ground before this," he said with bated breath. "See if you can see it through these clouds."

Nobody answered. Joe and Lefty were staring downward through the mist.

Judith was watching him with a look of strain and nervousness. He nodded to her, and for a moment he was so fright-

ened, so thoroughly scared, he went quite weak all over. But he had to do it now. He reached down and grabbed up the three bags of money from the floor where they were lying. He thrust two of them into Judith's startled hands. Then, before the men looked up, before Judith realized anything about his plans, he simply shoved her violently and brutally over the basket rim.

Her single piercing scream came rising through the mist, and Joe and Lefty whirled almost together. If she had gone in silence, as Brent had hoped she would, they both would have slipped away and disappeared into the cloud before the bandits were aware that they had jumped. But the scream defeated Brent. He was standing there, a sack of money in his left hand, his parachute-line snapped to his harness—and there wasn't time to jump to safety now.

Lefty was swinging down upon him with a rifle, and Joe was behind Lefty, already reaching for that deadly Luger.

There was no chance. Bill Brent knew that. He knew that he was gone. But, having no weapon but his fists, he launched a wild, terrific right at Lefty's jaw.

Lefty tried to dodge, but his rifle-barrel caught upon a stay, and the blow landed! Lefty staggered back, slumping down on Joe. Joe was cursing viciously, still trying to bring his gun-hand free. There was no room to move, here in this crowded basket with Lefty half sprawled across the corner there. And for the fraction of a second Brent was free.

He seemed frozen in his tracks. He tried to move, and his muscles responded in a kind of sluggish unreality. With what seemed then to be an infinite deliberation, he reached up and snapped down upon the valve-cord—and the lower end came free within his hand. He snapped the rip-panel cord likewise—and then turned and dived away into the cloud.

A shot, and then a volley of shots cracked out above him, but he was already in the clear, his parachute bloomed out above him in the writhing mist. He drifted down, broke into clear air, and saw Judith's 'chute spread out upon the ground. Only when he landed did he realize he still had a money-sack in his left hand.

OLD Nat Garder had two thousand acres of rich cotton land, and Brent and Sanders were his week-end guests. With Judith, they sat upon the pillared

veranda, each with a frosty mint julep in one hand; and if the evening was a little muggy with humidity, no one seemed to notice it. Judith, sitting close to First Lieutenant Sanders, glanced repeatedly at William Brent, and each time smiled.

"Dad," she said, with mock reproachfulness, "what do you think of an Army officer who would push a lady out of a balloon?"

Nat Garder boomed: "Hell, if I could get a twenty-five-hundred reward for doin' it, I'd do it too! Brent, what're you a-goin' to do with all that cash?"

Bill Brent laughed. "Wait till I get it. When I do, I'm through being a bug-hunter—"

"You're just as through now," Sanders interrupted, "as if you'd figured some way to destroy the balloon. There isn't another surplus bag at Scott to send down here for a replacement, and the D.O.A. is going to use their bug-traps on airplanes from now on."

Brent smiled thinly in the darkness. A falling star cut a swath of incandescence through the southern sky. He said: "However that may be, I'm going back to Scott and do a lot of heavy dating with the C.O.'s daughter; and if I'm lucky—well—" His voice trailed off.

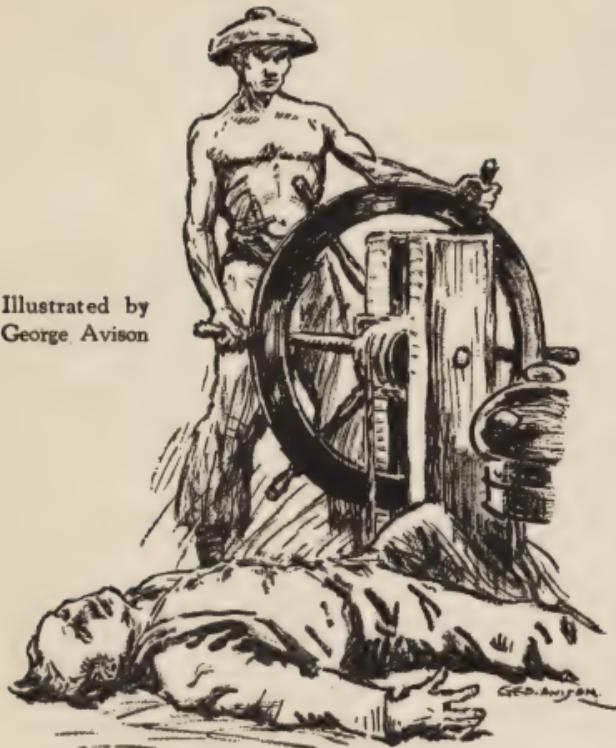
S ANDERS put in thoughtfully: "Bill, you're pretty smug about this business. There's one thing I'd like to know: I guess those birds have been lost in the Gulf, all right, because it's been ten days; but I don't quite see why they didn't have the sense to valve that sausage down!"

Bill Brent lighted a cigarette. The match flared upon his face, which was inscrutable. His eyes were veiled. "Valves have failed," he mused. "Control-lines have broken, once or twice. Without Judith's and my weight, the balloon would have ascended to great height, especially after it climbed through the overcast into the sun, and the warmth expanded the hydrogen. There was a strong north wind, aloft. Oh, any one of several things could have happened. But why worry? The men were killers, and having them killed that way saved the State a lot of money. As to how it happened—well, why even speculate? I'm satisfied to be going back to Scott. That's really what I wanted, anyhow."

He did not see Judith Garder's knowing glance, for he was staring out into the starlit night.

The

Illustrated by
George Avison



At his feet sprawled
the ship's helmsman.
The *Flying Star* was
headed straight for the
rock-girdled shore.

THE *Flying Star* of the Furnival Fleet, eleven months out of Salem, had followed a traditional course. Loaded principally with salt cod, she had crossed the Atlantic to Madeira and there had exchanged that humble commodity for wines. Around Good Hope she had sailed, then across an interminable stretch of monsoon-roughened water to Bombay, Calcutta and the island of Mauritius. At these ports her skipper, George Sedderly, had disposed of a small consignment of barrel-staves and wagon-wheels to the small tradesmen, and his fine Portuguese wines to the English nabobs. In return payment he accepted "pillar" dollars of soft silver, which, in the last port of his outward voyage, he would use to purchase the return cargo of tea.

But before sailing for China he had planned one more venture. He had sailed south to Bencoolen on Sumatra. Now, with furl'd sails, his ship lay in Bencoolen harbor. This was in the late summer of 1840. . . .

Sedderly thrust his wide shoulders out

the cabin window. A hot dazzle of sun, sharp as Dyak arrows, beat down on him. He shaded his eyes with his hands. Dark blots moved along the shore. Yes, there were the coolies, pushing out in proas to reach his ship. A new kind of cargo, the agent had foisted on him, this trip! Chinese coolies who wanted to take passage to their homeland.

"It will help some," he reflected, drawing in his head again. "Their money will raise our profits to thirty per cent. But thirty per cent! If I'd been let follow the route by the Horn, we'd have cleared two hundred per cent for the voyage. Why, the Chinee are fair' crying for sea otter pelts from Vancouver's Island! And what'll Houqua say, when I tell him: 'No, I didn't bring you any sandal-wood from the Sandwich Islands—we came by Good Hope.'" He lifted a huge hand, tanned to the color of saddle leather, and stared at it. Unquestionably a slight tremor twitched his powerful fingers. "Palsy!" he told himself gloomily. "This voyage is aging me before my time. But she doesn't know it! All that

DRAGON BELL

A deeply interesting novelette of adventure at sea and in China by an able writer—the author of "The Manchu Cloud" and "Son of the Typhoon."

By JAMES W. BENNETT

soft soap of hers about me being the only Furnival skipper she'd trust! And her not going any farther than Madeira! I should've guessed, when I saw her bringing eight boxes of clothes aboard—"

A knock sounded at the door, interrupting his lugubrious musings. He heard a voice, gay and sweet:

"Oh-hoh-oh? Capt'n George? May I open the door?"

"No!" he bawled. "No, ma'am," he amended, "you mayn't!"

A delighted chuckle came from outside. "I know it's hot, and you aren't dressed. But put on your shirt and breeks, and open the door. I've a matter to talk over with you."

"My shirt, my breeks!" he whispered in a scandalized tone. "The brazen baggage!"

Then an inner honesty forced him to expunge the epithet. Claire Furnival was not brazen; nor was she a baggage. She was a motherless child who had always lived like a boy—striving doggedly to emulate her two brothers. But last year the Asiatic cholera (brought to Salem by a returning tea ship) had taken not only her brothers but her father. And now on her seventeen-year-old shoulders rested the full weight of one of New England's great shipping dynasties.

WITH a vicious tug, Sedderly belted his trousers about a waist muscled like a wrestler's. He fastened a stock around his hot neck, opened the door and stepped on deck. "Now, Miss Furnival?"

"Miss Furnival," Claire mimicked, smiling. "Till this trip, you always called me by my brothers' nickname: Sprat."

"But I sha'n't, any more," he said grimly. "You're owner of this ship—and you're not letting me forget it!"

Her smile vanished, leaving the young face oddly serious. About the mouth ap-

peared a stubborn line, like one that he had often seen in the face of Captain Furnival, her father. She said crisply:

"I just heard that you planned to take on Chinese coolies here in Bencoolen. Is that correct?"

"It is," he admitted grudgingly.

"My orders as owner of this ship are: that you will not bring them aboard."

"But what's wrong with our doing it?" he asked sharply.

"Because it's cruel! Years ago, I heard a captain telling my father about carrying five hundred coolies from Canton to Peru. The captain had jammed them into the hold and closed the hatches. When he reached Peru, only twenty coolies were alive—and half of those left were raving mad."

SEDDERLY made no reply. What Claire said was true. Yet there was another angle to the picture which she did not know, one he did not intend to show her. He stepped to the ship's rail. "See those proas coming out to us? Filled with coolies! Our agent in Bencoolen has accepted their money and pledged them passage."

"Oh!" Claire's voice was uncertain. "You say, he's pledged them?"

"Aye."

"Then I'll agree to let them come." Claire paused and added firmly: "Provided that none of them are fastened below hatches. Not in this dreadful heat!"

"They'll be sent below," he retorted with equal firmness. "No coolies are going to be given the run of *my* decks!"

Claire stiffened and spoke slowly, her words like drops of corrosive: "I see. You're just like that penny-sucking murderous captain on the South American run!" Abruptly she turned from the rail.

Startled, Sedderly called after her: "But listen! Let me tell you—"

She did not pause, and his lips closed. He was used to Claire's temper and to its sudden childish effervescence; he even found it amusing. But this was not temper—this was disgust. Then, just as she was disappearing in the saloon, he blurted out angrily:

"Very well, then! We won't batten down the hatches! We'll let them run all over the decks!"

But even as he spoke, he was appalled by the promise he gave.

A HALF-HOUR later as the young Englishman, the Furnival agent, came over the rail to the deck of the *Flying Star*, he suddenly stared. Sedderly, hurrying forward to meet him, suppressed a smile at the Britisher's astonishment. Claire was just leaving her cabin. In spite of the furious equatorial heat, she looked as crisp and fresh as if she had just been walking in the garden of her Salem home. Her gown of India muslin was cut modestly away from her tanned young throat. Pinched in at her slender waist, it flared widely to the deck, just revealing her laced black slippers. In a whisper, the agent asked:

"Is this not something of a novelty for you, Captain, to be taking a Mission woman to Macao?"

"Does the girl look like a psalm-singing Missioner? 'Tis Miss Furnival, owner of this and twenty other ships. She is not stopping at the Portuguese colony; she plans to go with us into Canton."

"Furnival, eh? I heard rumor that the Captain had died and a daughter had inherited. But Captain,"—the agent seemed to recall himself,—"the Chinee allow no women at the Canton Factories."

"So I've told her," Sedderly said dryly. "And told her—"

He broke off, for Claire was approaching. Sedderly introduced the agent, who was both eager and gallant. He listened for several moments to the young Englishman's respectful banter; then he stalked away. He might be the youngest skipper in the Furnival fleet, but he was, he knew, painfully deficient in small talk.

When he came out on deck a few moments later, Claire had left. The agent was leaning over the rail, bawling orders in Malay to the paddlers of a cluster of proas under the ship's bows. In each of the canoes Chinese were crowded.

The Englishman lifted his head. "There's your cargo, Captain. Not so promising, but the best I could do."

"How do they happen to be down here?"

"Stranded. Their junk cracked up on our outer reef. They've spent the last week in my compound. That's their head-man, the big fellow at the ladder. He's a queer one—dignified as a bonze."

Sedderly stared down at the burly Oriental. He was fairly adept at reading the Chinese physiognomy, but this man's face was baffling. It was too intelligent for that of a coolie—although he wore the blue coolie cloth of the poor, nor had it the calculating astuteness of the merchants at Canton. As he caught the rungs and ran up the ladder, his motions were unusually lithe. Reaching the deck, he turned to Sedderly and asked in pidgin English:

"You Numbah One, dis ship?"

"Yes."

"My unwo'thy name, Pak-lin. I am Numbah One, these coolie'. You' agent say my men must go in hold. I say that we stay on deck—"

"Why, the damned cheek!" interrupted the agent. "This blighter knows blinking well he's not going as any deck passenger!"

Sedderly turned somberly to the agent.

"Yes. He is."

"But Captain—"

"Sorry!" Sedderly interrupted stiffly. "Those are my orders. Your duties end with the delivery of these men."

The agent opened his mouth to speak and then closed it. Two spots of angry color burned in his cheeks. He stepped back.

Sedderly turned to Pak-lin. "Get your men aboard."

THE head-man leaned over the rail and gave a shout. As he did so, the blue cloth of his jacket strained tautly, as if a stick were fastened beneath the girdle. Sedderly's hand went out, flipped up the jacket and jerked free a short sword with a curved blade. He glanced at the weapon, then without a word hurled it far out into the water. Pak-lin whirled about, his face convulsed. Huge cord-like veins suddenly stood out on his neck. With unexpected sinuous speed, two powerful hands shot toward Sedderly's throat and clamped there.

The Captain felt a furious twist. Spots danced crazily before his eyes. Instinctively he tensed his throat muscles, aware that the Chinese sought, not to strangle him but to break his neck. Straining

Pak-lin's eyes glazed.
He toppled to the
deck.



sharply away, he dropped his hand to his knee, then brought his fist up, with every ounce of his weight behind it. The blow landed true, flush on the point of the jaw. Pak-lin's narrow eyes glazed; his deadly hold about Sedderly's neck loosened. With a sharp exhalation of breath, he staggered and toppled to the deck. Grimly the skipper stared down at the prone figure. He was roused by a cough from the agent.

"I think, Captain, that you have an interesting voyage before you."

"Aye. But no one can say that I haven't been warned."

HASTENED by following winds, the *Flying Star* sped on her course northward. Sedderly found his Chinese passengers surprisingly docile. For days now they had squatted on their haunches in the shade of the sails, drowsing or talking in the highly inflected idiom of Kwangtung. Occasionally he paused to listen, for he was not a little proud of his ability to comprehend the Chinese speech. It was forbidden, on penalty of death, for any Chinese to teach his tongue to a foreigner; but on the previous homeward voyage the Captain had brought back a clerk from the Canton Factories. Aboard ship—away from the dread jurisdiction of the Co-Hong—the *shroff* had traded his own speech for Sedderly's.

No, reflected Sedderly, the passengers were offering no trouble. Even Pak-lin seemed to have ignored the Captain's act in taking away his sword and knocking him unconscious. Yet the eyes of the head-man were peculiarly veiled; and the skipper muttered: "The way he looks at

me, he might be a cat and I a West Injun parrokeet."

The air grew slightly cooler. Hainan was sighted and passed. Then one evening Sedderly gave a gusty sigh of relief. Tomorrow morning the ship would sight Lintin. There he would be able to bundle his passengers into sampans and be rid of them. They had only stipulated to be taken to the island at the river's mouth, not up to Canton.

That evening Sedderly ordered the cook to prepare the best meal the galley could offer. In another twenty-four hours he would be in Canton, and at the Factories he could obtain fresh food. He asked Claire if he might have the honor of dining with her. It was not often that his duties or his sense of the fitness of things allowed him to suggest this.

DURING the meal she was extremely gay and excited. On the morrow she was to see China—that fabulous land so inextricably bound into the hearts of Salem folk. At the close of the repast, Claire spoke of this:

"Perhaps you wonder, Capt'n George, why I'm forcing you against your judgment to take me to Canton. I know there's great risk in it—you've made me realize that; but every moment of my life, since I could remember, I've wanted to go to China. It's in my blood—just as it was in my father's. Before he was stricken, he promised that I should see it. He too spoke of the risk, but he told me of a plan that would make it less dangerous—"

"What plan?" Sedderly interrupted apprehensively.

But Claire shook her head. "Tomor-



row I'll show you. But this was the voyage I was to take with my father. When I 'reached seventeen,' he promised. Now that he—that he's gone, I have the feeling that he wants me to carry out the promise he made me."

Sedderly nodded soberly, looking down at the cloth. Then his eyes narrowed. The tablecloth seemed to be shadowed. He jerked up his head. A maroon glare bathed the window. With a wordless ejaculation, he leaped to his feet. A loud bellow came from the lookout:

"Fire! Fire, forrad on the port, amidship!"

Ellis, the first mate, pounded heavily along the deck.

"Bring out the crew, fast, Ellis! Get the men lined up with the buckets!"

"Aye, sir!" And the mate was gone. Sedderly paused at the saloon door. "Claire, lock yourself in."

He stepped out on deck, closed the door after him and waited to hear the key turn in the lock. Something seemed to brush his cheek, followed by a rasping sound on the door back of him. Claire gave a cry.

"Claire! You're not hurt?"

"No! But the blade! The point of a knife came through!"

"Keep away from the door!"

He peered beyond the murky glow into the farther darkness of the bow. The thrower of the knife was not to be seen. He turned and ran into his cabin. From a sea-chest he drew out a brace of pistols. Only a brief glance showed him that they were tampered with. Yet that afternoon, when he had examined them according to his regular routine, they had been untouched. One of them he was able to

mend. At top speed he loaded and primed it.

As he ran back to the deck, he nearly collided with a sailor who was rushing water from the drinking-butts below. The flame was blazing, licking the timbers of the deck. Where were the rest of the men? Had they been caught below-decks? Massacred?

Then the seaman suddenly reeled and dropped to the deck, clutching at his throat. Near by a shadow moved. Sedderly caught the profile of a man, high Tartar cheekbones. He fired his pistol. The Chinese swayed, and with a queer wail, fell back against the rail.

"Where in Hades did they get those daggers?" Sedderly muttered, staring down at the blade which transfixed the sailor's throat. "Must have smuggled 'em aboard while we waited for the dawn tide at Bencoolen!"

Another sailor appeared, with a brimming water-bucket. He shouted: "The men have cornered a score of Chinee below low."

"Here, I'll take that water. You get back and tell them to line up with buckets. This fire's gaining fast!"

The sailor obeyed. Shielding his face, Sedderly tossed the contents of the bucket into the mounting flame. A small cloud of steam arose. He backed away and stared anxiously out in the direction of the shore, which should be about four miles away. If that fire got any more of a hold, they'd all have to take to the boats. Well, by God—the shore wasn't there! He twisted about and stared toward the stern. Then with a grunt of comprehension, he sprinted toward the poop.

A Chinese, naked to the waist, was at the wheel. At his feet—body twitching ominously—sprawled the ship's helmsman. Behind the vessel the line of the wake curved in a wide semicircle; the *Flying Star* was headed straight for the rock-girdled shore.

As Sedderly ran, he lifted his empty pistol. The Chinese at the wheel threw up his arms to protect his head. But instead of striking, the Captain ducked beneath those lifted arms and caught the Oriental about the waist.

The man kicked and clawed, but Sedderly bore him to the rail. The skipper gave a grunt and a heave. Into the void the man hurtled, arms and legs waving grotesquely—down to the dark water below.

Sedderly then lunged for the wheel.

He caught the whirling spokes, steadied them, and with all his strength bore down, inch by inch. Slowly, reluctantly, the ship swung back into her set course. He stared down at the ship's helmsman. The man's throat, he saw, had been cut from ear to ear. He couldn't stay here. The wheel would have to be lashed. A rope? He could see none. His belt—that would do. He whipped it off, looped it about the wheel and buckled it to the steering-post. The belt was of stout leather; perhaps it would hold. He must risk it.

He sprinted forward again. By now a thin line of men passed buckets along the deck from hand to hand, the last swinging the water over the flames. But the fire, with malignant life, darted at the foremast, crawled over the closed hatch, licking the deck.

Sedderly took a hand with the buckets, sluicing the deck around the area of the fire to check the flame. But as he worked, he had a feeling of menace greater than the fire. The Chinese! He shouted to the mate:

"All the coolies cornered, yet?"

"Not more than half of them."

"Not more than half," Sedderly muttered. Where were the others? He looked up, rubbing his face with his arm.

By God, there was one of them, now! Behind that coil of rope, crouching! The man's torso glistened with oil—a wrestler's dodge. A knife was stuck in his girdle. Sedderly started. The wide shoulders, the knotted muscles—yes, it was Pak-lin.

SEDDERLY'S impulse was to drop on the head-man, as a panther springs upon his prey; but some racial sense of fair play made him call out a warning. With lightning speed, Pak-lin whirled about to face the Captain, his fingers opening, fan-wise. The skipper's hands closed into tightly knotted fists. The two men crashed together.

Sedderly struck viciously, half a dozen short jolting blows. Pak-lin gave to each, rolling his head instinctively. Then his hands went out, like twin snakes. The Captain felt one arm caught and cruelly wrenched. With his free fist, he pounded Pak-lin's face, now unprotected, ribboning the heavy lips. But the head-man's pressure did not relax; it deepened to excruciating pain. In another moment he would snap the bone. Suddenly straining taut every muscle, Sedderly rammed into Pak-lin with a

shoulder, at the same instant tripping him. The grip on the Captain's arm was broken.

Pak-lin fell like a cat, bringing the skipper down with him. Again Sedderly could feel those swiftly moving arms wind about him. He found his neck in a vise. He twisted and strained, but that vise grew only more ominously tight. In spite of his own great strength, he knew that here was an adversary with a strength equal to his own, plus far greater cunning. He lessened his straining efforts. He must conserve himself for one supreme effort, an attempt to break this hold.

THE Chinese was evidently waiting for that instant of relaxation, for a hand went to his belt. A knife flashed before Sedderly's eyes. He stared up into that impassive Chinese face, expressionless as an idol's. He saw the knife slowly poised. . . . Was this death?

Then he caught sight of another face, a white oval, queerly stained by the glare of the fire. He gave a sobbing gasp:

"Claire! Go—back!"

Pak-lin twisted about, to meet this new menace. Sedderly caught the Oriental's wrist. Claire, he saw, had something in her hand—yes, a pistol. With almost contemptuous ease, Pak-lin wrenched free the wrist with the knife. The blade darted down. At the same instant a roar echoed in Sedderly's ears, and the vise-like grip about his neck gave slightly. He jerked his head desperately to avoid that descending knife. He felt a searing sting along the side of his neck. The Chinese toppled backward limply. As Sedderly climbed dizzily to his feet, Claire whispered:

"I've killed him! Oh, I've killed him!"

"No," Sedderly said hoarsely, peering down, seeing a powder-mark high on Pak-lin's naked shoulder. "But you kept him from killing me!"

The fire was still burning but it was under control now, one of the smoke-blackened, dog-tired sailors told Sedderly. But he allowed them no rest. A man to get back to the helm. More water to be sluiced.

After seeing these orders obeyed, he carried the wounded Pak-lin to his own cabin. The head-man was groaning softly, his eyes glazed. But Sedderly took no risks. He trussed the man thorough-



A subdued group of Orientals! "All finish". Mebbeso, you not shoot us now?"

ly with a length of rope. After that he humanely bandaged Pak-lin's shoulder. A handkerchief wound tightly about his own neck stanched the blood from the glancing knife wound.

At the door of the cabin, as he was leaving, he met Ellis. The mate's clothing was ripped and spattered with blood. He reported:

"We've managed to tie up all the Chinee we could find, sir. Had to kill eight. There are still about a dozen unaccounted for, probably hiding below-decks, aft. We'll get them, easily enough."

"What about our casualties?"

"Enough to cripple us a bit, sir. Three killed, six wounded—a couple of them seriously. Damme, but those Chinee can fight!"

"Fight!" Sedderly echoed grimly. "Of course they can fight! It's their trade! They're not coolies; they're pirates!"

A sailor, posted on deck, gave a warning shout. But this was needless. An elderly Chinese, leading a subdued group of blue-clad Orientals, walked slowly forward from the after hatch. Their

hands were weaponless and lifted high in the air. The old man spoke:

"All finish". Pak-lin kill. We no can do. Mebbeso, you not shoot us now? Mo' bettah to give us to Hoppo at Lin-tin, tomolla?"

"So you don't want my brand of justice?" Sedderly said curtly. "I've a right to hang every one of you. For piracy."

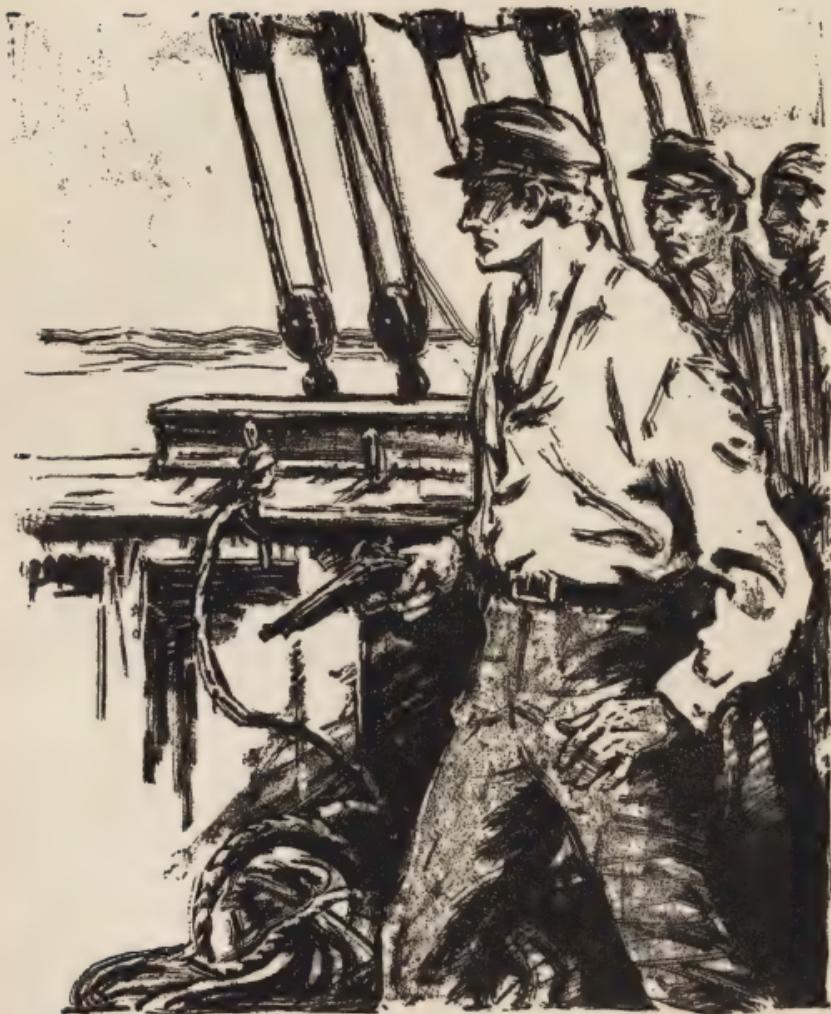
"My know. But if you makee kill, you will t'low all body ovah-bo'd. If Hoppo kill us, mebbeso he bling ouah body back to Canton. All man like to be bury in homeland."

"But the Hoppo will torture you."

"My know. But mo' bettah you give us to him."

A suspicion hard to define pricked at Sedderly's mind. Why was this man anxious to court torture? Possibly he was telling the truth about the disposition of the bodies. Strenuous efforts, the Captain knew, were always made by the relatives of executed Chinese to take the dead to their home village and give them a proper burial.

And there was another factor, out-



weighing his suspicions. On the morrow he must face the Hoppo. That Chinese Customs officer might object to Sedderly's meting out summary justice. The Cantonese were extraordinarily touchy, these days. He said gravely:

"Very well. Tomorrow I'll turn you over to the Hoppo."

A tremor—was it fear or exultation?—passed across the old man's face. Then it was gone, leaving the leathery, wrinkled visage once more bland and ingratiating....

Quietly the ship lay hove to. It was dawn, and the waters were touched with amethyst. From an island, almost in-

credibly green, topped by an ancient pagoda, a junk put out. At the head of the bare mast a long pennant—yellow with a black dragon on its field—fluttered. From the boat's after-deck came the rhythmic chant of men moving on a treadmill, furnishing the power for a paddle-wheel at the stern.

In the bow stood an elderly obese Chinese in robes glinting with gold thread. A peacock feather drooped from his conical hat. On his breast gleamed an embroidered square, the *putzu*, proud insignia of the mandarinate. This was the Hoppo. Sedderly ordered a ladder lowered to the junk as it came along-

side. But the Customs representative shook a fat hand before his own face in a sign of negation.

"You come down," he called. "My b'long too fatto to climb laddah. My take you' wo'd fo' you' cahgo."

"Very well, Honorable and Pre-born." And the Captain descended to the deck of the junk.

"How muchee *ahpien* you catch?"

"None, *Lao-yeh*. You know surely that the Furnival ships have never carried opium."

A flicker of emotion that might have been disappointment passed over the broad pockmarked face of the Chinese. But he said blandly:

"That velly fine. No *ahpien* allow' in China. My velly strict now. What you biling?"

SEDDERLY took from his pocket the ship's cargo-list and read off the items. The Hoppo yawned, and he did not appear to be listening. Yet an instant after the Captain had ended the official announced the entry-fee for Canton—a total that was correct to the penny as Sedderly had previously estimated. The Hoppo called for ink-stone, camel's-hair brush and flowered paper. These were brought him on a small portable table. Swiftly he wrote down the totals in the beautiful spidery ideographs of China. No money changed hands. It was considered beneath the dignity of the Emperor's own representative to collect duty. The fee would be paid by Sedderly later to the Hong merchants in Canton, who would scrupulously forward it to the viceroy of the province.

"And now, Pre-born, I have a grave matter to report," Sedderly said slowly. And he told of the fire and attempted piracy.

The Hoppo's eyes widened a trifle, but his answering voice was bland: "Oh-a, yes? My takum. Blingum Lintin and killum."

He looked up to the deck of the ship. His heavy body visibly tensed. . . . Peering from her cabin window was—Claire. Sedderly muttered under his breath. He had warned her against this very chance.

"Ey-yah! B'long woman! You no can bling Canton-side!"

"I'm taking her to the Portuguese grant of Macao," Sedderly countered, yet realizing that his voice sounded unconvincing.

The Hoppo gave an unexpected chuck-

le, deep and rumbling. "My think not. If you go Macao-side, you not stop Lintin. Time b'long plitty late to pick up best tea. Mo' bettah you go quick to Canton. Keep woman on ship. Tell no one. My say nothing." He accompanied this last by a delicate rubbing together of his fingers. The mock-jade protectors on his preposterously long nails made a thin tinkling sound.

"Yes," Sedderly agreed quickly. He gave a formal bow, turned and climbed up the ladder to the deck. In his cabin he pressed a concealed spring that opened the door of a small safe. Here were stored the bags of pillar dollars soon to be used in the purchase of tea. He weighed one of the smaller sacks in his hand, removed half its contents and slipped them into his coat pockets. Again descending to the junk, he handed over the half-filled sack.

"Little bag must be full," said the Hoppo, cavernously chuckling.

Making no protest, Sedderly obeyed. He had held out the coins in his pocket in the Chinese manner, since occasionally the Orientals approached a bargain step by step.

"Now," commanded the Hoppo genially, "bling down pi'ates."

AT the Captain's signal, Ellis began to lower overside Pak-lin and his co-conspirators. The Chinese, tightly bound, were dropped to the deck of the junk. The mate then lowered the cadavers of those corsairs who had been killed in action. As they lay before the Hoppo, the quick and the dead, he kicked each one in turn—brutally. Pak-lin alone escaped. Sickened by this senseless cruelty, Sedderly was tempted to intervene. Yet he dared not, for it was within the Hoppo's power to refuse him entry to Canton. He asked hastily:

"Prior-born, have I your permission to depart now?"

At once the Hoppo was again all smiles. "Oh-a, yes. Goo'-by."

Sedderly mounted to the deck of the *Flying Star*. On the Customs boat, the *laodah* lifted a quavering voice in strongly accented song. The feet of the coolies began to push against the treadmill as they joined in the chant. The tempo of the song quickened, and their feet moved faster. A space of blue water appeared between Chinese craft and the ship. Standing at the rail, Sedderly watched the junk moving back to the green-peaked island crowned by its

crumbling pagoda. On its deck there was some sort of confused motion. He strained his eyes; but the distance now was too great. He took from his pocket a brass-bound spy-glass and focused it.

"Well, by God!" he muttered.

Clearly, through the lens, he saw that the Hoppo was cutting, one by one, the bonds of the corsairs.

THE *Flying Star* steered a careful way through a maze of islets to the Bocca Tigris, the Tiger's Mouth as the Portuguese called it—or the Bogue, as it was named on Sedderly's chart. Then slowly the great ship began her sail up that most beautiful of rivers, the Pearl. Near at hand, low-lying rice-paddies spread their ineffable green mantles beneath a blazing sun. In the distance rose terraced hills planted with tea bushes. Villages were passed, the thatched huts clustering close to the water's edge. Near one of these lay a red-walled Buddhist temple. Across the water came the dull *thud-thud-thud* of a peach-wood gong calling the monks to prayer.

The river curved sharply. Sedderly hurried back to the wheel. They were coming to a tricky stretch of channel. Presently he became aware of a figure that had come up behind him. A voice, high-pitched yet queerly gruff, spoke:

"Hi, there! Get the—hell away, and let me take command!"

He whirled about. Perched on the rail beside him was a figure in wide seaman's trousers, a knitted jacket and a blue scarf, bareheaded, short-haired.

"Claire! For the love of heaven, what have you *done*?"

The smile on Claire's lips stiffened. "Does it—it make me look terrible?"

His eyes narrowed. "Turn around." She obeyed.

"Well, damme!" he muttered.

Her underlip began to jut ominously. "Don't stare at me, that way! I did this; I cut my hair, so that I wouldn't make trouble for you when we reached Canton. 'Tis the plan I hinted at, last night."

"But it is no disguise!" he went on dourly. "You look like one of those strolling actor-women in tent-shows, regular Jezebels!"

"Jezebels, did you say?" Claire drew in her breath sharply.

Her hand went out, and she struck Sedderly furiously across the mouth. He stood still, a tide of red flooding his



cheeks, giving them a queer copper hue. Voice shaking with rage, Claire said:

"Now I'll go back to my cabin. I'll put my woman's clothes on again. My hair I can't put back. I don't care now what sort of trouble I get you into! I—I hate you! When we get back to Salem, I'll take away your command! I'll—" She turned and ran along the deck. Then the door of her cabin closed with a tremendous bang.

Sedderly's large hand tentatively explored the leathery cheek that her fingers had struck so smartly. He spoke aloud: "Now, why did I say that to her? Play-acting Jezebel! There never was an actress living, as innocent-looking in boy's clothes as Claire, by God!"

The helmsman started, for the oath had been breathed explosively down his neck. "Did you speak to me, sir?"

Sedderly's eyes focused. He scowled. "I did not speak to you. And while you're prying into affairs that don't concern you, the ship's heading straight for Fu Lan Shoals."

The wheelsman gave a bewildered look. "Oh, no sir. They're well to starboard."

The sailor strained his bleached eyes to pierce the gathering mists of afternoon. Ahead, the swaths of atmosphere seemed heavier, like a cloud low on the horizon—an immovable cloud, unruffled by wind. "May I just say, sir—that there lies Canton!"

THE anchorage on the river opposite the Factories was crowded with ships of a dozen nations. Sedderly planned to anchor the *Flying Star* a quarter of a mile upstream. His decision, he knew,



would cost him sharply in lighterage fees, and it would probably draw a sharp reprimand from the Chinese Hong merchants, whose rules were strict. Yet he dared not poke the nose of his vessel into that cluster of loading ships, and let some sailor catch an inadvertent view of Claire.

As the ship, with quarter sails set, edged its slow way past the other vessels, Sedderly could hear the well-remembered chanting of coolies loading the rattan-covered, lead-lined chests of tea: Hyson, Dragon Well, Bohea, Pekoe. Eerily the voices came: "Heh-hoh! Heh-hoh! Ai-yah! Ai-yah! Ai-yah! Heh! Heh! HOH!"

To the right lay the Factories, a group of large ugly buildings erected on marshlands, grudgingly leased by China. There, during the three months of the tea season in which the foreigners were allowed to remain in Canton, lived the Factors: representatives of the great shipping firms of the world. Next to Old China Street, which led into Canton, was a building whose flag held a pattern of stars and stripes. Sedderly felt a queer surge of pride on seeing that banner. It meant that his young and ambitious land was represented in China.

THREADING a way among the many sampans on the river, a foreign boat approached the *Flying Star*. At the stern of the small craft floated a pennant of white stars on a blue field. Sedderly ordered the ladder lowered. He

"Claire, for the love of heaven, what have you done?"

recognized its passenger, the Factor Charles Talbot, who handled the trade for the Furnival ships.

Talbot climbed the ladder, followed by a short, plump Chinese who negotiated the rungs with considerable difficulty. On reaching the deck, the Oriental pulled a fan from the creased folds of flesh at the back of his neck and unfurled it with an expert flick of the wrist. After greeting Sedderly, Talbot jerked a thumb toward the Chinese:

"That's one of the Co-Hong's linguists. He says he has some sort of message for you—but I don't doubt that the message is only to ask for the job of interpreter."

Sedderly nodded. He opened the door of the dining-saloon and bowed the Factor inside. Talbot seated himself wearily at the table, and took a sip of the Madeira wine which Sedderly poured for him and then said gloomily:

"You come to Canton during parlous times, Captain. I want to warn you to show exceeding care while you're here. Only four months back, a mob of natives attacked the British Factory—to destroy the opium stores. Then they went on, as a mob will do, and tried to set fire to the other Factories. If the Chinese Co-Hong Guard hadn't protected us—well, today you'd find you buildings in ruins and all of us dead. The British are taking a high-handed attitude. They're demanding that Canton be made an

open port, with all restrictions ended, and with proper guarantees of safety. The Chinese, on the other hand, are petitioning that Canton should be forever closed to the foreigners, so that no more opium will be brought in. The whole city's like tinder. One spark—and up it will blow! But enough of that, now. You're wanting to know about tea. You've arrived late for the best shipment. If I had only had word!"

"We were late starting from Salem," Sedderly explained. "You have heard of Captain Furnival's death?"

"Aye. That was sad news for all of us. What, think you, will be the fate of your ships?"

FOR a moment Sedderly did not answer. That question would lead directly to Claire. Somewhat awkwardly he thrust before Talbot a sheaf of papers, saying: "I don't think I'm in a position rightly to say. Here, sir, is my cargo-list, and the balance sheet of pillar dollars for buying tea. While you look it over, I'll just go out and speak to that linguist."

The plump little Chinese was standing at the rail gazing pensively down at a score of sampans clustered about the *Flying Star*. Coolies were holding up baskets of custard apples and fresh lichees. The seamen were bargaining for these, tossing down their hard-earned pence and receiving the baskets hoisted to the deck on bamboo poles. The linguist turned as Sedderly approached. He spoke in a low guarded tone:

"My have unpleasing message fo' you', mastah. Man say if my no bling it, he makee kill me. He say I must bling it chop-chop—"

"What is the message?"

"You have woman on ship. Man say you mus' give ten t'ousand pillah dollah'; then he makee you no troub'. But if you no give—then he will tell all Canton. Mob come. Makee kill."

"Who makes this demand?" Sedderly asked sharply.

"My don' know."

The Captain's hands doubled into fists. But the eyes of the interpreter were steady and without fear. He added:

"My no lie, mastah. If my know, my tellee you."

Halted by this, Sedderly was silent a moment. Then he asked:

"What is your 'name'?"

"Milk-name, Fong. Crown-man-name, Wu."

"Very well, Wu-fong; according to the rules of your guild, you must serve the foreigners in good faith. Are you attached now to any ship?"

"No!"—spoken reluctantly.

"Then I'll ask you to be this ship's linguist."

A perturbed frown creased the high forehead of Wu-fong. "Ey-yah! Mebeso my makee lose my life. But if you ask me, I must do. I be you' linguist. What thing must I say to that man?"

"Tell him no! I haven't the money to pay—"

"He talkee me you have fifty t'ousand pillah dollah' on ship," Wu-fong interposed swiftly.

"That money isn't mine."

"Then, mastah, my think mo' bettah you see Houqua."

"Houqua?" Sedderly gave a start. That was the last thing he wanted to do—approach that austere arbiter of the Co-Hong. How could he justify to Houqua his breaking of the Hong merchants' strictest rule: bringing Claire to Canton?

The linguist evidently read Sedderly's thoughts, for he said quietly: "My think Houqua al'eady know'. All thing' about West Ocean men, Houqua know'."

"Yes, I suppose so. Well, get ashore, Wu-fong, and tell your man I'm paying no blackmail. Then meet me at the Factories jetty in two hours. I'll go and see Houqua."

SEDDERLY returned to the saloon. Making the excuse that the ship was short-handed,—which it was,—the Captain refused Talbot's invitation to dine ashore that night. After the Factor's departure, Sedderly ordered a cut of cold ham. As he ate, he pored over a chart which he had brought to the table. At last he pushed the chart away. He understood now how it was possible for the news of Claire's presence here to have preceded him. A shallow-bottomed junk with full sails could with safety take a course from Lintin cutting off half the distance which the *Flying Star* had traveled.

Before leaving for shore, Sedderly called Ellis into his cabin and gave strict instructions to guard the ship. He made no explanation. There was a chance that the whole affair might be a hoax. Or perhaps a simple attempt at extortion by some underling in the Hoppo's service who had also glimpsed Claire. The Hoppo, rascally as he had shown himself

to be, would hardly jeopardize his official position by demanding blackmail. Another possibility was Pak-lin. The pirate's bonds had been cut. But would Pak-lin dare to come to Canton? The Chinese gave their corsairs short shrift.

SEDDERLY swung over the rail and down to one of several waiting sampans clustered about the ladder. He directed the coolie to scull him to the Factories.

At the jetty, squatting on his heels, was Wu-fong. The linguist held up a hand to stay Sedderly from disembarking.

"Mastah, Houqua stay at he summah gahdens. We go that side."

Sedderly nodded. Wu-fong jumped heavily into the sampan and gave an order in the highly inflected vernacular. The ferryman sculled the boat into mid-stream. The linguist sat bolt upright, his body oddly tense. Several times he glanced apprehensively back toward the shore. In the hope of tricking him, the Captain suddenly shot out the query: "Did you give my message to Pak-lin?"

"Pak-lin? My no savvy." Then comprehension seemed to dawn. "Is that name fo' Numbah One man? My talkee with olo man. He say he b'long Numbah Two. He say Numbah One Man is sick. Catchee wound in he shouldah."

Sedderly muttered to himself: "Well, that settles it! Pak-lin!" He turned to Wu-fong. "What did the Number Two say, when you told him he'd get no money out of me?"

The linguist did not answer for a moment. His face twisted in a spasm of fear. Then, as though by a supreme effort, he stilled the twitching muscles and said unemotionally: "He say my b'long fiend of *jan kwei*—of fo'eign devils. If my no *makee* you pay, he kill me!"

Darkness fell over the river as the sampan steadily made its way upstream. The foreign ships and the Factories dropped behind. The water became like dusky velvet streaked by glimmering gold lights from theater barges, from *tanka* boats with their freight of Chinese courtesans. From them came the tinkle of moon-harps and butterfly zithers. Then the river narrowed. Fronting the shore were the high walls of the gardens of the wealthy. The sampan nosed in and drew up at a small stone jetty.

Wu-fong climbed stiffly from the boat and led the way toward a jade-green lacquered gate. He lifted his hand to knock, but the gate swung open. A servant in plum-colored silks bowed, then held aloft a lantern to light their way up a winding sanded path.

As he followed the servant, Sedderly caught tantalizing glimpses of rock-gardens, of twisted firs, of damascened kiosks, of lakes on which lotus floated. The path ended at the door of a small octagonal pavilion of tile. This was bare, except for three chairs, high-seated, with fretted backs. On the wall hung a single scroll, a painting from the brush of China's greatest master, Wu T'ao-tzu.

A door across the room opened. A slight frail man in plain gray silk robe entered. Clasping his own hands in greeting, he said softly:

"China give welcome, Captain Sedderly."

"Thank you, Venerable Hou."

Houqua seated himself, and motioned for Sedderly to take the chair opposite him. Wu-fong remained standing, his hands meekly folded in his sleeves. Suddenly the Hong merchant spoke, voice stern:

"Is it true talk, Captain, that you have woman on you' ship?"

"Yes, Houqua. That is why I am here. I want your permission—"

The Hong merchant lifted a thin veined hand. "This is you' fou'th voyage to Canton; you know rule 'bout women. To break rule now is bad! *Velly* bad! My people are mos' angry with all fo'eigners."

"But this is a special case, Venerable and Pre-born. The woman on my ship is its owner. The daughter of Captain Furnival."

Houqua started. His cold agate eyes seemed to soften, to grow milky. "Ey-yeah! The daughtah of Captain Furnival! Of my olo fien'!"

Sedderly was quick to catch the change in tone. "You mean, that you'll let her stay?"

THE Hong merchant appeared not to heed the question for a moment. He muttered: "The daughtah of my olo fien' who die." Then his voice lost its musing tone: "Yes," he answered. "You' ship may stay till tomolla. Then you must stahnt on you' home voyage."

"Tomorrow? But my cargo, Honorable Hou? The silks? The tea? I

can't go with an empty ship! I've no provisions! I'm short-handed!"

"All thing' possible. We can make you' fo'eign chop-chop. My coolies will get goods on ship. I find sailor' fo' you."

"But my tea?" Sedderly repeated desperately. "I'm here late. At best it will be hard to find even second-grade. It will take days!"

"Oh-a, no. I have catchee some velly good Bohea, Numbah One. Befo' time I think I keep it fo' myself. But now, my sell to you—" Houqua paused and then concluded quietly: "At Numbah Fo' low price. Five hundred chests."

Sedderly wondered if he could be hearing correctly. "Your generosity, Ven-erable Hou, it—it's magnificent! How can I—"

Again Houqua held up that blue-veined hand. "Did I not tell you that Captain Furnival was my flién? Fo' fo'ty yeah' he tlade with me. He was hono'ble, big-hea'ted man. Fo' he mem-ory, I do this."

A fortune for Claire, Sedderly thought jubilantly. And a chance to outwit Pak-lin. They would be gone—away from this grim and ominous Canton—before the corsair could harm them, before he could gather together any fleet to attack them at the Bocca Tigris! He said slowly:

"Very well, Mighty Hou. With your help I shall be on my way down the river by this time tomorrow night."

AS Sedderly's sampan drew under the bow of the *Flying Star* on its return from Houqua's gardens, a head was thrust over the rail.

"Captain! Do you need help, sir? Shall I come down the ladder?"

Sedderly stared blankly. "Have you gone daft, Ellis?"

He swung himself rapidly up the ladder, signaling Wu-fong to follow. The mate stretched out a hand to help him over the rail.

But he barked: "Why, damme! Am I a woman to be coddled?"

"But—but—but," sputtered Ellis, "a coolie came from the American Factory—in the Factor's own livery. He said you'd slipped on the jetty steps and broken your head. That you were seriously injured."

"Well, you see that it isn't true."

"No. That's so, sir. But I was certain you must be in a bad way, sending for Miss Furnival—"

"What? Sending for Miss Furnival?

By God, Ellis, you—you haven't let her go ashore? After what I ordered?"

"But sir, I couldn't stop her!"

Sedderly's powerful hands went out and caught the officer's hefty shoulders. Despite the mate's bulk, the Skipper shook him until Ellis' teeth rattled. Then he dropped his hands. Ellis stared sullenly down at the deck and muttered:

"She was like a mad person. I couldn't keep her here. She kept saying that you'd sent for her. She was so furious with me for trying to hold her, that she wouldn't let me go ashore with her!" The mate paused, then added placatively: "She was with the Factor's own servants. 'Tis no great distance there. She'll be safe at the Factory."

"Safe?" Sedderly softly pounded his fists on the rail. "Tricked out of your hands by as old and shabby a ruse—Yes, she's safe—in the hands of Pak-lin!"

"**W**HAT—what are you saying, sir?" whispered Ellis.

Sedderly turned away from the rail. "By God, I'll rouse the Factors! I'll call a meeting of the Hong merchants! I'll force the Co-Hong to send a delegation to this Commissioner Lin!"

His sleeve was plucked, then, by Wu-fong.

"Mastah, mo' bettah you no do such thing."

"No? What'd *you* have me do? Sit here with my hands folded and pray to your blasted pot-bellied Rice God?"

"No. You come with me. My take you to this man' house—Pak-lin, you callum. We talkee ransom. If you go to Factories, makee big walla-walla, then my think Pak-lin killee woman, hide body. All finish!"

"So, you know where Pak-lin is hid-ing?" Sedderly's eyes had become suddenly icy with suspicion.

But the linguist's placidity was un-ruffled. "Yes, my know. I talkee to olo man that you no pay money. He leave, velly mad. Then I think it good thing if I follow an' see where he go. He look back, six-seven time—but I hide so he no see me. He go house neah West Gate."

Sedderly hesitated. Which was the better way? To rouse the Factors and the Co-Hong? Or to try to negotiate directly with the pirates? Wu-fong had probably spoken the precise truth when he said that a hue-and-cry might cost Claire her life. There was the chance,

too, that the Factors and the Co-Hong might flatly refuse to aid him. In bringing Claire here, he had broken a vital rule of the port.

He asked curtly: "How do we get to this house of Pak-lin's?"

"My show."

"All right. We'll push off, just as soon as I can get my pistols."

"You'll let me go with you, sir?" Ellis put in.

Sedderly scowled at his mate. "Have you not done enough damage?"

Ellis flushed, but insisted: "I'm not a bad shot, sir."

Sedderly paused. "I know you're not. But the chances are pretty long that we'll not come out of this alive."

"All the more reason for my going, sir."

"Right, then! Along you come! Let's get off!"

IN the dim flicker of the jetty lantern, Sedderly looked at his watch. Less than three hours until dawn. And at day-break Canton stirred into restless life. Less than three hours to find Pak-lin. To try to bargain with him for Claire! A terrifying thought rose and would not down: had Pak-lin already broken that vibrant young body by torture? Other queries stabbed at his mind: would the corsair demand a ransom so huge that it would wrest the last penny of the Carnival fortune?

Wu-fong turned into a dark lane and broke into a dog-trot. With long strides, Sedderly and Ellis followed. The lane twisted and turned. It was pitch-black and seemed completely deserted.

On and on those felt-shod feet pattered. New suspicions began to tantalize him. Did the linguist really know the way? Or was he leading them on—to some hidden ambush?

Rhythmic sounds, distant yet growing louder, came to his ear:

"Ey-hah! Oh-hah! Ey-hah! Oh-hah!"

Wu-fong darted into a side lane, stopped, and motioned Sedderly and Ellis to join him. There in the heavy shadows the three crouched, hardly daring to breathe. A palanquin, borne by four chanting coolies, swung past them. Inside rode a mandarin—that Sedderly knew, for only members of the mandarinate were permitted to have four chair-coolies.

In the flare of a torch borne by a small ragged boy who ran beside the sedan, Sedderly caught a glimpse of the occu-

pant, asleep, mouth open. The sleeping mandarin was the Hoppo!

He must have just come from Pak-lin. This could be no coincidence. Sedderly's faith in Wu-fong mounted. The linguist actually *was* leading them to the pirate's house.

AGAIN they took up their groping way. Overhead the starlit sky was virtually hidden by a lacework of long, rectangular, gilt-and-lacquer signs over the shop-fronts. With the dawn, this lane would be like a great beehive, instinct with life! . . . Wu-fong halted abruptly. His cautious whispering voice floated back to Sedderly:

"Heah, Hono'ble, b'long house that olo Numbah Two man go into."

Sedderly examined the blind street walls of the house. Behind them, he thought, Pak-lin might have his entire band in waiting. But, as Sedderly had traversed the last few paces, an idea had come to him. A scheme that was a little mad—that of a surprise attack. Perhaps that very madness might give it value. It should be totally unexpected. He decided to risk it. He whispered to Ellis:

"Will you help me to force my way into this house?"

But before Ellis could answer, Wu-fong spoke, his voice quavering: "No! No! Not fightee, mastah! Bettah talkee how much you pay!"

By the dim light of a gate lantern, Sedderly saw that the linguist's face had turned yellow-gray and that his lips trembled.

He answered curtly: "I'm not asking you to follow us. If you're afraid, you can stop here until we come out. If we don't come—then go to Houqua and tell him what's happened."

"No." Wu-fong's voice still quavered. "My b'long you" linguist. My peace man, not good at fightee, but my go with you."

He lifted his long grass-linen robe. Fastened inside the girdle beneath was a small dagger. Somewhat gingerly he pulled it out, gave it a dubious look, then thrust it into his sleeve.

"Lift that brass knocker," Sedderly ordered, at the same time drawing his pistol and looking at the priming.

"What thing my tellum?"

"Say that you're from—from the Hoppo. We'll keep in the shadow till the doors are well open; then we'll make a rush for it."

Wu-fong dropped the knocker with a loud clang. There was a delay of several moments; then shuffling footsteps could be heard.

A voice asked sleepily in Chinese: "What does the honorable gentleman outside the gate wish at this late hour?"

Wu-fong repeated Sedderly's message, giving it in his own tongue. There was the sound of cross-bars being lifted. The doors swung open.

Abruptly the gateman's sleepy face stiffened—he had caught sight of the two crouching foreigners. He opened his mouth to utter a yell, but Sedderly forestalled that by jabbing the pistol against his head.

"Take me to Pak-lin!" Sedderly ordered sharply.

Cowed by that harsh pressure of steel against his temple, the gateman moved sullenly back, around the spirit screen, to a courtyard that lay just within. The court was surrounded on three sides by single-story dwellings. Two of them were in darkness, but the one opposite the gate was illuminated by a warm golden light that sifted through a partition of latticed wood and parchment paper. From that room came a man's voice, low-pitched but clear, throbbing with anger:

"Ey-yah! You wantchee me gouge out you' eye? Then why you no nod you' head? Talbot, *Meiguo Factoh*, he can catch money. You send him chit. Askee fo' hun'ed t'ousand pillah dollah'. No? You won'?"

A searing flame crackled in Sedderly's

Excited voices gave tongue
behind them: "Kill! Kill!"



brain. He needed no explanation of the words. He recognized the voice of the speaker. For an instant his eyes flamed with rage and blinded him. Then he jerked away the pistol from the porter's head and plunged across the court. The gateman, freed of the menace of the weapon, took a scuttling step in flight, only to be brought down groaning by an awkward thrust of Wu-fong's dagger. Sedderly jerked open a flimsy door.

IN the center of the room was Pak-lin, ghastly pale, eyes glistening with anger and fever. His left arm had been tightly bandaged to his body. This Sedderly could see by the light of a lamp suspended directly over Pak-lin's head, a translucent bowl of whale-oil with a floating wick. Seated opposite him, bound hands and feet, was Claire. A cloth gag cruelly distorted her face. At Sedderly's entry, she turned her head. He saw the dazed weariness in her eyes shift to vivid hope. Pak-lin snarled a command. A man, lurking in the deeper obscurity beyond the direct rays of the lamp, lunged toward Sedderly. A huge fellow, powerfully muscled. In one hand was a bared curved sword. He paused, just back of Claire, and lifted the sword.

Sedderly did not dare fire his pistol because of Claire. The sword whistled down, not at Claire as he had feared, but aimed at himself. Instinctively Sedderly dodged. But so inordinately swift was the stroke, that it caught the barrel of the pistol, knocked the weapon to the floor and numbed his arm. Awkwardly he fumbled with his left hand for his spare pistol. Again the sword was raised—and he knew it was too late to free his weapon. He threw himself backward and waited, for a fraction of a second that seemed an eternity, expecting the sword to descend.

But instead, a shot rang—and the room was filled with the acrid stench of powder. Ellis had fired the shot, taking the risk that Sedderly had dared not try. The lifted blade wavered, then clattered to the stone-flagged floor. Clapping both hands to his waist, the giant sank down, whimpering in a queer, dreadful falsetto.

The almost hypnotic spell of the gleaming sword broken, Sedderly took a quick step toward Pak-lin and said swiftly:

"Your life will be spared if you order your men not to molest us. If you try treachery, I'll shoot."

Pak-lin's eyes were like shiny balls of

amber. He answered slowly: "Yes. My p'omise."

With a bound, then, Sedderly was at Claire's side. He unknotted the cloth at her mouth. It had cut her lips. The strips of tough cloth about her wrists, too, had been pulled so tightly that they had torn the flesh and were spattered with blood. He muttered:

"Oh, my God—hurt—you!"

Her flecked lips moved to speak to him, but no sound came.

As he worked at the binding about her ankles, he glanced up. The door was half open, and Ellis was standing guard there, his back to the room, peering tensely into the courtyard. Wu-fong was still outside.

Then, just as Sedderly started to lift himself to his feet, Claire cried out hoarsely in warning, and a heavy weight descended crushingly upon his shoulders; Pak-lin had leaped upon him. An arm clamped itself about his neck. Sedderly tried to twist about, but the pressure became more ominous, completely garrotting him. He pulled himself upright, then suddenly dropped on hands and knees and arched his back. The ruse worked. Pak-lin's body hurtled squarely over Sedderly's shoulders, its momentum breaking the brutal hold about his neck.

That bandaged arm prevented Pak-lin from staying the fall. . . . There was a queer ripping and cracking noise. Sedderly knew that sound—it was the snapping of neck vertebrae. He had killed Pak-lin.

HE stood for an instant drawing the hair back into his tortured lungs, then turned to ask Ellis:

"Did your shot rouse Pak-lin's men?"

"Oh, Lord, did it! They're thick as fleas in a sailor's bunk, out there," came the worried answer. "The only reason they haven't riddled us is for fear of pitting Pak-lin."

Sedderly lifted Claire to her feet. She swayed dizzily and caught his arm.

"Are you—are you all right, Claire? Shall I carry you?"

"No," she answered in a blurred, strained voice. "You'll need your arms—against *them*."

He nodded briefly. Shielding her body with his, he moved through the door into the courtyard, where Ellis had already stationed himself. Sedderly became aware of dim shapes creeping noiselessly forward. As the nearest figure became outlined in the light from the room, the

skipper fired his remaining pistol. The man dropped, sprawling.

Another assailant crept forward from that massed group. As he neared Sedderly, he lifted a short daggerlike sword. The Captain dodged its down-swing; then, clubbing his pistol, he struck with all his might. The Chinese stiffened and clutched meaninglessly at the air. Then, with a moan, he slid quietly to the side of his fellow.

SEVERAL shadows now disentangled themselves from the mass on the other side of the court, and began to creep forward. Others were flitting along the wall toward Ellis, attacking him singly. The mate had wrested a sword from one of the corsairs and was whirling it cutlass fashion. . . . They still hadn't shot, although the target—two men and a girl against that lighted paper-parchment wall—was perfect. Probably they still feared that their shots would injure Pak-lin in the room behind. And Wu-fong? Where was he? Sedderly called his name.

"My heah," came the voice of the linguist, from the door of the room. He took several swift steps and strained upward on tiptoes to jerk the whale-oil lamp from its hook. Wu-fong had realized the jeopardy in which that light was placing them all. Through the opened door, his body was clearly outlined. . . .

Then the pirates fired. The linguist staggered. He was hit. But he steadied himself, gave a grotesque leap and lifted the bowl of the lamp from its brass ring. Half the oil spattered on his face. He paid no heed. Dropping to his knees, he thrust the flickering flame of the wick to the paper that filled the interstices of latticework. The paper caught fire. From the far side of the court cries of horror rose.

"Look out!" shouted Ellis. "They're all coming!"

They advanced in a dark, converging wave. But their objective was neither Sedderly nor Ellis; it was the door into that flaming room. The Captain tried to stay them, clubbing with fist and pistol-but. Ellis swung his sword like a madman. It was as if they attempted to halt a tide. Once inside the room, the men beat frantically at the flames. But the fire, feeding on that oil-soaked floor, was spreading magically. Flames raced along the walls to the parchment windows of the two dwellings on either wing.

Abruptly Sedderly realized that the

courtyard was empty of Chinese. He took a quick step forward, paused, looked back into the room filled with screaming, panic-stricken men futilely beating at the myriad tongues of the fire demon. Wu-fong! The little linguist was in that room. As the Captain peered through the flames and smoke, he saw two of the corsairs run with drawn swords toward Wu-fong, who had backed to the far end. Though badly wounded by that fusillade of pistol-shots a moment earlier, he still kept to his feet. He had dropped his dagger in order to lift down the lamp; now his hands were empty. Sedderly ripped out an oath.

"Come on back in there, Ellis! The devils are killing Wu-fong!" But Ellis threw out a staying arm. "Too late, sir! Look—"

The linguist had thrust those empty hands before his face in a pleading gesture. But Pak-lin's men thrust their swords into his body—then again and again, in a glut of rage.

Sedderly spoke: "Yes. Too late. Let's get away!"

He slipped his arm around Claire, and half-supporting her, ran across the court. Ellis pounded along at their heels. For the first few steps they were unnoticed. Then from the door of the burning room came a spatter of pistol-shots. The aim was too high, the bullets chunking against the spirit screen that guarded the outer gate. Around the screen they ran and out. There for an instant they drew up.

Ellis—his face splashed with blood so that he looked like a demon from the Taoists' conception of hell—said anxiously: "We haven't Wu-fong now. Which way—in God's name—shall we go?"

"Anywhere!" Sedderly muttered. "Just so it's away from here!"

And the three of them fled blindly into the hushed darkness.

AT the end of a few minutes of headlong flight they drew up, for Claire was gasping for breath. Although Sedderly had answered Ellis vaguely, the skipper had taken the lead and had tried to retrace the way Wu-fong had brought them. But the narrow lane had forked a half-dozen times. In that black labyrinth he could not even be certain of general directions. As they paused, they listened for the sound of pursuing footsteps but could hear none. But as they looked back, they saw an arrow of flame dart into the sky—then another, and another. Ellis muttered:

"Other houses are catching fire. Let's get moving, sir, before it reaches us. These Chinee houses are all like tinder!"

Sedderly looked anxiously at Claire. Her abraded lips moved:

"Yes. I—can go—now."

Their halt proved to be dangerous. Figures had run out of the dwellings into the lane, just ahead of them, men who pointed to the darting javelins of flame in the sky and chattered in fright. Yet the three dared not go back. Sedderly, in the lead, tried to edge about a knot of the wildly gesticulating Cantonese. He almost succeeded, but one of the men caught sight of his features. The Chinese stared, unbelieving, then he lifted his voice: "*Fan Kwa!* Foreign devils!"

With a sharp jolting blow, Sedderly sent him reeling back against the wall, momentarily silencing his outcry. Always intimidated by physical force, his fellows cowered back. Sedderly thrust Claire forward through the opening they gave, and again the three began running.

For a moment or two there was silence behind them. Then excited voices rose, voices that gave tongue to that most ominous of cries:

"*Sha! Sha! Kill! Kill!*"

They could hear the patterning footsteps of pursuers. They darted down a side lane, lost the sound; then the alley wound back into the main artery again, where they were once more espied. . . . Across an arc of sky spread a huge maroon glare now. It foretold one of Canton's great fires. . . . Once more Sedderly sought a side lane. Down this they pounded, their lungs aching. Hearteningly it drew farther and farther away from that arterial roadway.

More faintly now came the shouts of their pursuers.

BUT Sedderly gave a groan of dismay. The path ended in a *cul de sac*—a "blind street," the Chinese called it. Before them reared high rose-colored walls, cut by a gate that was opened. From within a building—just beyond a wide, dimly illuminated courtyard—came the lugubrious thumping of a peach-wood gong and a low monotonous chant: "*Om mani padme hum*"—Sanskrit words, the meaning of which was not clear even to the chanters, a reference to the jewel that is the flower of the lotus of paradise. . . . A Buddhist temple! It might offer sanctuary!

The open gates had been pegged into position. Sedderly dropped to his knees

and tugged at the thick wooden stake driven into the soil between the flagstones. Ellis attacked the peg holding the opposite gate. The spikes had been driven years, perhaps centuries, ago—as a symbol that the gates were never to be closed. Claire stood watching the narrow lane they had just quitted, alert for signs of pursuers.

Abruptly, she warned: "I think—Yes! There they are!"

TO Sedderly's ears came that now-familiar grim sound of running feet. With a gigantic heave in which every muscle of his broad back went into play, he uprooted the spike. He ran to Ellis, and between them, they pulled free the second peg. Tugging at the doors, they slowly closed them, the hinges protesting with a keen shriek. Just as the nearest of the pursuers drew up outside, the two shot the dusty cross-bars into position. At that instant, a quiet voice behind them said in Chinese:

"Why, O men from across the Bitter Waters, do you close the doors upon my people?"

Slowly crossing the courtyard was an old Celestial, bare-headed, incredibly wrinkled. In the dim lantern-light his scalp gleamed with the white of scar tissue—the thirteen cicatrices of the Buddhist novitiate. Instead of the usual gray robe of the order, however, he wore a gorgeous gown of yellow silk incrusted with gold thread.

"You are the bonze of this temple?" Sedderly countered, speaking also in the vernacular.

"Yes. Its most unworthy Number One."

"Then,"—the skipper took a threatening step toward him,—"you will either give us sanctuary, or I shall kill you!"

The inquiring expression on the deeply wrinkled face did not alter; the rheumy eyes were steady. "Kill? I do not admit the meaning of that word. If you are determined to send me from this incarnation to the next, carry out your threat; this person has nothing to fear from such a change; it would only bring me nearer Nirvana—"

His subsequent words were blanked by a sudden furious pounding at the gate and the cries of: "*Fan Kwa! Fan Kwa!*"

Lifting his voice above that outer sound, Sedderly said quickly:

"Please forget that I uttered that threat; it was inspired by fear. But you

will keep the gates closed? We demand sanctuary!"

The bonze was silent for several moments. The noise outside grew, as more and more persons evidently joined the initial cluster. At last the priest spoke:

"The gate is old; its wood is solid, but not for long will it hold if it is the will of the people to enter. There is one alternative for you, the only alternative. I shall offer it to you. Come."

"What?" Sedderly demanded bluntly.

The bonze turned and began to limp across the courtyard. "A most pleasant and honorable one," he answered.

Following the old priest, the three crossed the court. The bonze mounted a flight of worn steps guarded by two great bronze Lions of Fo, mute protectors of the shrine. He led them through a candlelit Hall of Lohans—filled with small images of those messengers of the gods—then across another open court, smaller, and into a large temple.

Here was enshrined a gigantic, fearsome figure, fully fifty feet in height. It appeared to be fashioned of black-lacquered wood—a negroid monster with glaring eyes in which cut emeralds had been set, with disproportionately huge lips tinted red, wide and grinning. Yet this, Sedderly knew, represented no demon to frighten the wicked; it was a statue of Meitreyia, the Buddha of the Hereafter.

It was from this shrine that the sound of chanting had come. The great room—its ceilings black with the smoke of myriad incense sticks—was filled with men in gray robes. Some, with half-closed eyes, were bowing before the statue. Others threw themselves upon the floor, thumping their foreheads in the kowtow. At one side sat a group of men, eyes completely shut, droning that interminable chant:

"Om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum."

So intent were they in their worship, so exalted by it, that none appeared to heed the strange procession: their bonze, the two blood-spattered foreign men, the woman with the close-clipped hair. The old priest led the way to the rear of the shrine, cut off from the view of the worshiping monks. The back of the Buddha, without carving, reared tall and straight to the dim, smoke-grimed rafters. Here the bonze paused and spoke:

"In the body of the Meitreyia is a door—and a ladder that leads up to the head. The head is hollowed, and at the



base is a platform. It is large enough to hold all three of you. There is but little air. One person can remain an hour. Three persons? Much less time than that. Yet it is not an unpleasant way to pass from this life to another that may offer you more hope. I, for one, have many times looked longingly toward it."

He opened a tiny concealed door in the base of the statue.

So that was to be their sanctuary! Death by suffocation—instead of at the hands of the mob!

A shaft of gray dawn-light pierced the dimness, a thin and tentative wand. The night was done, and with its close ended all hope of escape under cover of darkness. Sedderly's eyes focused upon that shaft of light, following it. It came from a door just behind him.

Taking a quick step, he opened the door. A small, bare, weed-choked courtyard lay beyond, closed in by the rear walls of the temple. In the center they were capped by a tremendous, vaulting bell tower. He raised his eyes to the summit of that tower with its narrow roofed parapet and its giant bell whose bronze surface was flushed with a vague rose light. A thought pierced his brain Yes, the bell offered one desperate hope. But what if that hope proved chimerical? What then?

He turned back from the door to Claire and swiftly told her of his indecision.

"Let's risk it!" she said instantly.

As Sedderly stepped through the door, the bonze gave him a startled look and said gently:

"You cannot escape that way. The wall is too high, and there is no outer gate; it has been bricked up for years."

Sedderly paid no heed. It was not escape that he now contemplated. At a dead run he crossed the court. Claire followed him.

On reaching the parapet, instead of crouching behind the shallow retaining wall, Sedderly stood at his full height. The tower commanded a view of the entire squat city. To the west a bank of black clouds, striated with ochre and maroon, told of the still-unchecked ravages of the fire set by Wu-fong. Much nearer than Sedderly had realized were the Factories and the river, shining silver in the dawn.

The temple buildings blanked his view of the front gate—but that ominous *thud, thud, thud*, told him that the portals were still holding. If only they would hold long enough for him to try his plan! . . . The bronze bell, tall and wide as a man's height, was—like all such Chinese instruments—without a clapper. But at his feet lay a long corroded iron bar used by the monks to strike it. He picked up the bar. It was heavy, weighing at least forty pounds. Swinging it in a wide arc, he brought it against the bell with all his force. The reverberation almost deafened him.

Ellis stared in stupefaction. "Captain! Have you lost your wits? Do you want all the city to know we're here?"

A wry grin lifted the corners of Sedderly's mouth as he again raised the bar. Ellis took a step toward him; but Claire, who knew Sedderly's purpose, put out a staying hand. She spoke to the mate, but her words were drowned in the renewed peal of the bell.

A third time, Sedderly struck the dragon bell with all his might. He paused, then gave it a shorter, softer stroke. As though in answer, the distant hidden crowd outside the temple roared a frenzied challenge.

Panting, Sedderly continued to pound the bell: three loud strokes and a softer one. Again and again. Between strokes he tried to listen for a certain answering sound—but his ears only rang with the deafening vibrations of the bell.

AT last his body, weakened by his wound, refused. He sank to his knees. The iron bar rolled from hands suddenly grown limp. Dimly he saw Ellis pick up the bar; vaguely he heard the mate shout, over the reverberations: "Don't know what—all about—but I'll beat the old gong for—"

In the distance, between strokes of the bell, Sedderly sought to catch a certain sound: the odd, moaning beat of Chinese drums. Yes! There it was! Or was his mind playing him tricks be-

cause he wanted so desperately to hear just that sound? He felt himself slowly toppling from his crouching position; the floor of the parapet seemed to rise to meet him. He heard Claire give a quick gasp of compassion. Her firm young arms slipped about his shoulders. The dawn seemed to have vanished; it was black night once more—a night striated by flashes of crimson light! Queer! That illumination appeared to come in bands, spaced: three bright, and then one, dim.

THE blackness thinned before Sedderly's eyes, raveling like a cloud in a high wind. Some one was speaking to him in Chinese.

"Hurry, Seh-duh-leh! Get to your feet!"

Houqua was bending over him, shaking his shoulder. The face of the Hong merchant was perturbed, the brown eyes tragically shadowed.

Then, just beyond Houqua, he saw Claire's face. And Ellis. They seemed bewildered. The realization came to Sedderly that he was no longer on the summit of the bell-tower, but lying in the courtyard directly below. Thronging the court were scores of Chinese, each in the uniform of the Co-Hong defense force. Then he *had* heard the drumbeat just before drifting off into the mists! The guard *had* answered the summons which he had sent booming over the roof-tops! . . . He lurched to his feet and stood swaying before Houqua. In a voice heavy with anxiety, the Hong merchant went on, shifting now to pidgin-English:

"Chop-chop! At gate we catchee palanquin, all shuttie up so no one can see. Must get you aboahd you' ship. You no wait till tonight. You raise ancho' now. Ey-yah! But you have makee plenty troub'!"

Houqua turned and walked rapidly across the court, imperiously beckoning the three foreigners to follow him. Lurching a little, his knees oddly weak, Sedderly obeyed. Claire slipped an arm about his shoulders to steady him. Ellis, face grim and pale, supported him on the opposite side. After several steps, he shrugged away their hands.

"I'm all right now. What happened, though?"

Claire answered: "A miracle happened. The Co-Hong guard coming *just* as the mob burst in the gates! I—I guess it wasn't our time to die."

Sedderly asked no more. In silence the three reentered and crossed the Meitreya temple, empty of worshipers now, yet dominated by that huge menacing statue, through the Hall of Lohans and at last to the outer gate, lying unhinged and splintered inside the courtyard. At the open portal more members of the Co-Hong Guard stood watchfully with drawn curved swords. To the west intermittent plumes of black smoke shot upward to the blue sky, smudging its clean early-morning purity. The smoke, Sedderly realized, was not as heavy by half as when he had last seen it; the fire was evidently being brought under control. Houqua, however, pointed to those jets of smoke and said bitterly:

"That you' wo'k. You makee bu'n, makee kill. Ey-yah! My pay big price today fo' my flien'ship with olo Captain Furnival!"

Sedderly shook his head. "Honorable Hou, the linguist Wu-fong is dead, so it will not harm him for me to speak. It was he who set alight yonder blaze. He paid for the act with his life, dying with true bravery. As for killing, blame me if you will; but blame also the man I fought: the corsair Pak-lin—"

"Stop!" Houqua lifted his hands to his ears. "My no heah what you jus' talkee! My don' know anything 'bout who kill' brothah of Commissioner Lin!"

"What? But Venerable Hou, I killed no brother of your Imperial Commissioner! The man whose life I took, was a pirate, a blackmailer, a kidnaper of women!"

Houqua shrugged his shoulders in a weary, defeated gesture. "All samee man. Pak-lin no pi'ate. He neveh spillum one drop of Chinee blood. He neveh take one blast *cash* of Chinee money. He b'long—how you say?—plivativeah. Fight fo'eigneah. My people all think he good man, gleat man." The Hong merchant turned and waved a peremptory hand.

FOUR sedan chairs, waiting outside in the lane, were carried into the courtyard. Into the first Houqua climbed. Claire, Sedderly and Ellis seated themselves in the remaining three, tightly drawing down the curtains. The Co-Hong Factory guard surrounded the palanquins. The chair poles were lifted to the bearers' shoulders. And there rose on the still morning air the "Ey-hah! Oh-hah!" of the carriers, as the procession wound its devious way through the

tortuous, crowded, sun-dappled lanes of Canton, to the river.

As the Co-Hong sampan neared the *Flying Star*, a differing coolie chant, from that of chair-bearers, came to Sedderly's ears. It was the immemorial song of lightermen loading tea. About the ship clustered sampans, alive with unusual activity and extraordinary haste.

SEDDERLY gave a quick inquiring look at the Hong merchant, sitting under the canopy at his side. Houqua shrugged. The grim pursing of his withered mouth did not soften as he answered that unspoken query:

"My p'omise you tea, my p'omise you food, my p'omise you sailoh'. Fo' so many yeah that my fo'get, I have been membah of Co-Hong an' Co-Hong has neveh fail' to keep its p'omise." Houqua was silent an instant and then went on in Chinese, as though talking to himself: "This person can only trust that by now the most exigent ghost of Captain Furnival is content!"

The sampan reached the ladder dangling from the side of the *Flying Star*. Sedderly rose from his seat, stepped back and indicated that Houqua should have the honor of being the first to mount. But the Hong merchant shook his head slowly. He said querulously:

"Neveh again will I set footee on fo'ign ship! I plenty tiahed of you' Weste'n chop-chop, you' hu'y-hu'y, love of the pillah dollah. It b'long true that you' silvah have makee me rich—but it no bling me much joy." The shrill tone dropped to a mumble, shifting once again to the native Kwangtung idiom, so indistinct that Sedderly had difficulty in hearing: "An old man—out of step with the times—my own son held as hostage to keep the peace. Peace? There is no peace! Like resisting the tide, for China to stem the barbarian torrent—"

Suddenly the murmur ceased. Houqua raised himself stiffly to his feet in the bobbing sampan. His hands drew together, knuckles touching; then he waved them ceremoniously before his own face. His voice strengthened, becoming clear:

"Good voyage, Captain Seddubly! Good wind! Good luck! When you come back, my think Co-Hong be all finish'. Canton will be open port. Even you' women can come." Houqua bent a chill, unfriendly eye upon Claire and then concluded to Sedderly in Chinese:

"May you have a hundred sons and a thousand grandsons."



Tiny David of the State Police trusts his life to a

THREE high officials of the New York State Police, unwilling servants of the twin gods Progress and Economy, sat in an office in Albany and made the ruling. They took the action with regret; but because of the nature of their training, they did it in a workmanlike manner. The result was a hard-and-fast rule, with no apparent loopholes for escape.

The troop horses, or the great majority of them, were to go, sacrifices upon the altars of the twin gods who controlled their masters. The blacks, the grays, the pintos and the roans—almost all the four-footed members of the cavalcade that had carried its gray riders to glory, and into a firm place in the affections of the residents of the State and the nation—they were doomed.

True, the troops operating in the snow-countries would be permitted to keep a few horses for patrol work when the roads were impassable for cars. The youngest horses would be retained for that purpose. All others would go.

To avoid sentiment in this weeding-out process, an impartial board of survey was named to visit the various troops

and select the mounts. As an additional check against the same quality, which might take the form of men attempting to buy in their own horses, it was ruled that all horses discarded would go the way of all condemned State property; and that, in this instance, meant only one thing—the glue-pot.

It was a hard ruling, but as even its most bitter critics admitted, a ruling that was both just and inevitable. Almost every troop stable contained horses long past the prime of life, eating their heads off. Now they were to go.

So, in the stables of the Black Horse Troop, the commanding officer Captain Charles Field, Lieutenant Edward David, and a gloomy stable-sergeant made a preliminary inspection. The board of survey was due the following day. The three men were silent until they came to a box-stall with a board above it bearing the name, "Border King."

"How old is this goat?" demanded Captain Field. His voice was gruff, but his eyes contained what looked suspiciously like moisture. Furthermore, as Captain Field had personally bought this horse for the troop some fifteen years



gallant horse and rescues a town in deadly danger.

previously, the question was rather unnecessary.

Tiny David leaned his huge form against the side of the stall, and gazed at the black horse.

"King isn't so old, sir," he ventured.

"Humph!" Captain Field snorted. "Twenty years old, if he is a day. You rode him up here when the troop was first formed, didn't you? And he was no spring-chicken then."

"Yes sir," Tiny David admitted. "We weren't very welcome—then. The natives resented our coming. Almost every town we rode through on the way up slipped us the bird as we passed by. But Border King just pranced along as if he was on parade."

He laughed bitterly.

"Some difference when I rode him at the head of the parade on North Country Day last year. The crowd went wild. Believe me, I had brains enough to know who they were whooping it up for."

AT this, the stable-sergeant joined in the conversation:

"They probably remembered that day at the State Fair when a trick-horse went

crazy in the rings of fire and bolted right toward the crowd. I never saw King travel the way he did that day."

He turned to Tiny David.

"You were on his back, sir, but he didn't need a rider. He was going it alone, and he did a bit of blocking-off that would have done credit to an All-American back. It was tough you had to draw a broken leg out of it, sir."

Lieutenant David grinned.

"Wasn't King's fault. When he was thrown off his feet, I felt him give a lunge to throw his body away from the crowd. Then, just as he hit the ground, he tried to roll so I would be clear. But my leg was so big he couldn't miss it. Just before I passed out, I remember feeling his nose pressed against my face. That horse—"

"Cut it out!" roared Captain Field. "Captain Hutton will be here tomorrow, and he knows horses. He has heard of Border King, and he will look for him. So Border King must be in his stall."

The commanding officer paused for a moment.

"The weather is blowing up," he continued, "and it looks like a blizzard.



"Buck up, Border King!" called Tiny David. "Just half a mile farther on!"

Captain Hutton wants to pass on all the horses, but we can't interfere with regular work." He addressed Tiny David. "You better get out on patrol early in the morning. Watch for stalled automobiles. Be sure you take one of the younger horses." He glared at his lieutenant. "Do you understand me?"

A smile played over the broad face of Tiny David.

"Yes sir. I think I understand the Captain perfectly. I think the sergeant understands also."

The sergeant was grinning with unholy joy.

"See that you both understand!" roared Captain Field, as he turned away.

THREE was much action and considerable mystery in the stables the following morning before daylight. In the stall that bore the legend "*Border King*," stood Boxer, one of the oldest horses of the troop, blinking at unaccustomed surroundings.

"Tough to make you the goat," was the comment of the sergeant. "But your number was up, anyway. And the Lord knows you've been a member of the better-dead club for the last three years."

In the stall vacated by Boxer, and still bearing his name, Booze, one of the youngsters, pranced about.

"Act your age," was the terse command of the sergeant.

Before the stall rightfully owned by Booze stood Border King, equipped with saddle, bridle, halter, blanket, feed-bag and other paraphernalia of the road.

Tiny David, his coon-skin cap pulled down over his ears, and muffled in his sheepskin-lined greatcoat, swung to the saddle.

"Get moving, Booze," he ordered.

The stable-sergeant swung the door open.

"So long, sir," he called. He patted the horse on the flank. "So long, Booze."

The door closed, shutting out the elements. The sergeant turned to the stable-watch.

"That's Border King." He jerked a thumb toward Boxer. "That's Boxer." He indicated Booze. Then he pointed to the empty stall in which Booze had lived. "Lieutenant David is out on patrol with Booze. I hope the Lord has mercy on any guy who gets mixed up on his horses. It is a cinch I won't."

It was a wicked morning. The north wind blew icily down the valley of the St. Lawrence and the entire North Country. Leaden clouds, ripped asunder, cast forth huge white flakes, that whirled hither and yon at the wind's will. Through it all, ever heading south, rode Tiny David and Border King. The road was a main thoroughfare, but it was deserted. Great white blankets had settled upon fields, trees and telephone

lines. The same blankets, only slightly reduced by the snow-fences, came to rest upon the road, making the going difficult.

Border King plowed his way forward, slowly but surely. He was old. Weeks of inactivity in the stables had done their damage to none-too-flexible muscles, but his great heart was sound. All this, his manner indicated, was a hark-back to the days of his youth. He threw his head up, and whinnied a challenge to the elements. He raised his feet smartly. He put them down firmly, with all the force of his powerful body. The sharp spikes in his steel shoes gave him firm footing.

Tiny David rode with the reins hanging loose. When you rode Border King, you were just a passenger. No need to pilot him around the deepest drifts. The horse sought the openings instinctively.

On and on they rode, fighting their way along a highway that was becoming more and more like an Arctic waste. Daylight had found the thermometer below the zero mark, and now it was headed downward toward new records. And the roaring wind, behind the snowfall, made a mockery of the usual "clear and cold" condition of the section. . . .

It was shortly before noon when they came across the first stalled car. Border King, without spoken command or pressure on the reins, came to a halt beside it. Two men and a woman, hopelessly lost, and afraid to venture from the poor shelter offered by the car, sat awaiting the end.

"Huddle together!" Tiny David, peering in the door, shouted to make himself heard above the storm. "Farm near here. I'll send them to you."

He remounted. Border King started off at the double.

Tiny David halted just long enough to dispatch aid to the stranded motorists. Then he and Border King went on, picking their way toward other persons who might be in need of help.

NORTH WIND tired. South Wind took up the task. Up the Mohawk Valley he sent a tremendous blast which enveloped the swirling flakes and transformed them into icy pellets. These pellets, swishing and cutting as they drove through the air, stung the faces of horse and rider. Then they came to rest upon the beds of snow, forming a hard, glassy and treacherous crust.

Border King wallowed through it. The crust broke beneath the weight of his

feet, and jagged fragments cut his fetlocks cruelly, leaving a crimson stain on the bed of white. But through it all he picked his way—occasionally, without pausing in his task, sending forth his whinnied challenge to the storm.

Here and there, where the swirling wind had cleared the ground, they encountered solid sheets of ice. Border King, without guidance from his rider, picked his way warily across them, pausing at each step until the spikes in his shoes took hold.

IT was a cruel, punishing grind for man and beast, and Tiny David gave a sigh of relief when they came upon a landmark. At the left there was a small lane, which branched off from the main road, and continued on for five miles to the hamlet of Perrick, a lumbering center, now almost deserted. Half a mile ahead on the main road, he knew, was the town of Rushville.

The Black Horse Troop had a sub-station at Rushville, and it offered a haven for Tiny David and the horse. There was no need of continuing the patrol. No person in his right mind would set out on roads like these. Any traveler who had started before the full fury of the storm was felt, had found aid by this time, or he had perished.

"Buck up, Border King!" called Tiny David. "Just half a mile farther on!"

The horse plowed on, stout heart and stout limbs carrying him through the storm.

North Wind rallied his forces, and sent a blast that routed South Wind. The temperature, which had sneaked upward, darted hastily back to its former position. The sleet once more became snow, heavy wet flakes, through which it was impossible to see.

Border King shied nervously, then halted abruptly. Then, through the swirling snowflakes, there lunged a ghost-like figure. It came closer. Tiny David was able to recognize a familiar uniform, which was coated with ice.

He leaped to the ground, and stumbled as he made his way toward the advancing figure. When it was a short distance away, he recognized Sergeant James Crosby, who was in charge of the Rushville patrol.

"Jim!" he called.

There was no answer, no sign of recognition. Lieutenant David sensed what had happened. Sergeant Crosby, completely exhausted by his battle with the

storm, was out on his feet, but his subconscious mind was driving him forward in a desperate but vain effort to respond to some urgent call for assistance.

Tiny David leaped forward, seized Crosby by the shoulders and shook him violently.

"Jim! Jim! It's Tiny!"

Crosby stared at him with unseeing eyes.

"Ti—Tiny?" he muttered.

"Yes, Tiny!" roared Lieutenant David. "What is it, Jim?"

Sergeant Crosby made a great effort.

"Got to get to Perrick—at once. Convicts—maniacs. Captured town.... Got word through—before telephone cut. Got to—"

He was unable to go on, but his finger indicated a pocket of his coat. Tiny David's hand explored its depths and drew forth a message torn from a teletype machine. It read:

ALL AVAILABLE MEN PROCEED AT ONCE TO HAMLET OF PERRICK. TWO CONVICTS, ESCAPED FROM STATE HOSPITAL FOR CRIMINAL INSANE AT LINTON, HAVE TAKEN POSSESSION OF SETTLEMENT. APPROACH WITH EXTREME CAUTION AND GO IN READY TO SHOOT TO KILL AS BOTH MEN ARE ARMED AND KNOWN TO BE KILLERS.

Tiny David peered through the storm. "Where's Perry?" he demanded. Perry was Crosby's partner. He shook the dazed man. "Where's Perry?" he repeated.

"Perry?" Crosby repeated the name. "With me.... Started in car.... No go.... Began to hoof it.... Got to hurry."

Tiny David held him fast, but his legs moved back and forth automatically. Gritting his teeth, Tiny David hauled off and struck Crosby full in the face with his gloved hand.

"Snap out of it!" he roared. "The Jim and Tiny stuff is out. You listen to me, Sergeant, and take your orders: Perry is out cold somewhere back there, and we are going to get him."

HE watched reason slowly replace the bewilderment in Crosby's eyes. Something brushed against his back. He turned to find Border King standing beside him.

He reached in the saddle-bag, drew forth a thermos bottle and removed the cork. The steam of hot black coffee floated through the frosty air. He held

the bottle to Crosby's lips and made him drink.

Soon Crosby pushed the bottle aside.

"Better!" he gasped. "Got to get Perry. Then get to Perrick."

Tiny David nodded grimly.

"You are taking orders, Sergeant. Here, let me help you into that saddle."

Disregarding the protests, he almost lifted Crosby into the saddle. Then, with Tiny David walking uncertainly beside the horse, they started onward.

THEY had gone only a short distance when they found Perry, face-downward in the snow. It was Crosby who supplied the solution.

"Farmhouse," he gasped. "Short distance ahead."

He tried to dismount.

"Stay there!" barked Tiny David. He lifted the form of Perry and swung it over his broad back. "Get moving!"

The procession groped its way onward. They were almost upon the house before they saw it.

The occupants came running in response to their shouts, and Tiny David issued a stream of orders. There was entreaty in Crosby's eyes. He rallied rapidly in the warmth, and soon added a vocal request to get started.

"Nothing doing," was Tiny David's verdict. "You are still out. Stay here with Perry. You couldn't make it on foot, even if you were starting fresh. I am going in on Border King. He will get there. Call the barracks and tell them to get help to me as soon as they can." His smile was grim. "I may need it, but I am not counting on it. Not over these roads."

Quite calmly, and disregarding Crosby's protests, he appropriated that man's gun and the weapon carried by Perry, placing the two revolvers in the pockets of his overcoat. Then he walked to the road in front of the house, where Border King was waiting.

The horse bucked his way back over the road. At the corner, a slight pressure of his rider's knee caused him to turn to the right, toward Perrick.

Here, horse and rider met the full fury of the storm. The branch road, unprotected by snow-fences, was covered with great drifts. Border King attacked them savagely, his body weaving from side to side, as he continued the slow forward progress.

One mile was a seemingly endless period of supreme exertion and agony.

The going was worse as the road wound along into the deserted country. Now there were huge drifts which seemed to swallow up the horse. In some of them Tiny David dismounted, gave the horse his head while he fought free, then swung back into the saddle.

Border King was battered, bruised and very tired when the second mile was finished. His breath came in laboring gasps. Only his gallant spirit carried him on.

Then, in an open space where the wind had full sweep, a solid sheet of glassy ice loomed before them.

"Steady, King!" called Tiny David.

He could feel the labored, mechanical action of the animal as one foot went forward, clamped down on the ice, and remained motionless until the spiked shoe took hold. Then the other foot repeated the process. It was slow and dangerous; but progress was being made....

Tiny David estimated that they were on the fourth mile when Border King showed signs of collapse. The horse was trembling with nervousness and exhaustion. His rider pulled him to a halt.

"Get your breath, King." Tiny David spoke to him as he would to a human companion. "Not much farther to go." He stroked the black, satiny neck. "Hate to do it, old-timer, but it's the only way. I wouldn't last ten minutes on foot."

Border King shook himself impatiently. Not waiting for the word of command, he resumed the fight.

It was a fight filled with heartbreak. The odds were unequal. All nature was

arrayed against the animal. He carried the additional handicap of age.

There were frequent pauses for rest now, pauses which Border King dictated, and which Tiny David respected by leaping to the ground in order to allow the horse to make the most of them. But each time Border King resumed his task without a word of command, and Tiny David vaulted back to the saddle as his mount got in motion.

Now there was less snow and more ice; and Border King, in his weakened condition, found the going ever more difficult. He stumbled frequently, often falling to his knees, but always regaining his feet. And always, as he fought his way forward, his black head, with the white star on the forehead, was held high.

He was doing a job of work, this black horse, one of the many jobs entrusted to him during the fifteen years he had served the gray riders. Perhaps his intellect was unable to grasp the full significance of that job. What did that matter? It was enough for him to know that the man in gray, who gave him his head through the drifts, and who tried to hold him up on the ice, wanted to move ahead along this road.

Very well. Border King would move him ahead. He would move him ahead

Illustrated by
Monte Crews



They had gone only a short distance when they found Perry, face-downward in the snow.

or die in the attempt. That was his part of the job. Later, his rider would swing into some sort of action. But this was his, Border King's, part of the job. Into it he would pour all the strength of his once powerful body, all the guile that he had acquired during years of coping with conditions like these, and all the courage that came from his gallant heart.

His every lunge forward proved that. The knowledge of it carried up to Tiny David, and caused a warm glow to spread over him. His eyes were soft. But his voice was harsh as he spoke aloud:

"Fit for the glue-pot, eh? Well, you'll never land there as long as your boss is able to navigate. You're a better man than any of us, King."

Then, as if half-ashamed of this outburst heard only by the horse and the gods of the storm, his mood changed, and he sang aloud. It was a ribald ditty, a parody based upon the song "Clap Hands, Here Comes Charley," and much in favor with the Black Horse Troop, because the first name of its commanding officer happened to be Charles.

Ahead of him lay the unknown, an unknown in which terror predominated, and in which the final chapter would certainly include battle, perhaps murder, and even sudden death. But all those things, and even the fury of the storm, were forgotten as he sang. Cares and years rolled away. He was a rookie again, happy and care-free, and out on patrol with a horse as young and as hell-bent for trouble as himself.

THE telepathy said to exist between horse and rider must have carried his thoughts to Border King. For as they fought their way along the last mile, the black horse found the going easier.

There was a last ten minutes of supreme effort that carried them to the top of a small elevation. Then, spread out below them like a stage-setting, there appeared the hamlet of Perrick. But between them and that goal was a down-grade extending for at least four hundred feet, its surface sheer ice, upon which neither man nor horse could find footing, and against which spikes would be powerless.

Border King seemed to sense that. He came to a halt at the start of the grade. His head swung back toward his rider. His eyes, the rims of which were coated with ice, seemed to say:

"There you are, Boss. I've done my bit. Now it's up to you."

Tiny David vaulted to the ground. Working with numbed fingers, he removed saddle and bridle. He unrolled the blanket, spread it over the horse and snapped the fasteners. Border King rubbed his shoulder with a black head as he worked. Then Tiny David walked carefully to the start of the grade, and surveyed the scene before him.

Years ago, Perrick had been a thriving lumber-town. But greedy axes had despoiled the forests in the vicinity, and the destroyers had moved on, seeking new fields. The buildings they left behind them had crumpled and decayed. Only five of them remained standing.

AT first glance, they looked much alike, those five buildings: The same sort of smoke poured from the five chimneys, ascending in almost a vertical line in the frosty air. The doors of the buildings were closed, and the windows were barred off by heavy wooden shutters. Outwardly, Perrick presented a picture of peace and tranquillity almost unreal.

Then Tiny David noticed one exception to the rule of conformity. In one building, slightly larger than the others, and which bore a sign, a window on the second floor was open, with shutters thrown back and the window pushed up. That window commanded a view of the front of the other four dwellings.

Tiny David's lips tightened. That, he knew, was the solution. The maniacs had taken possession of the little store. There they had food, drink, guns and ammunition. From that open window they commanded the situation.

For just a moment he pondered over the fact that there was not at least some show of resistance. Then realization supplied an explanation: Perrick was a ghost-town. Gone were the singing, cursing lumber-jacks who had peopled it in its days of glory. Only the ghosts remained. Old men and old women, too feeble and too impoverished to move in the path of progress. Children, too young to seek the trail of greater opportunity and fortune. Just ghosts. Ghosts could not stand up before armed maniacs. But ghosts could die.

Tiny David seated himself on the ice at the start of the grade, his feet pointing toward the village below him. He took a final look at Border King, standing calmly beside a tree which afforded some shelter from the storm. Then, using his mitten hands, Tiny propelled himself forward on the ice.



As the maniac ran forward, Tiny David held his fire until a bullet clipped his coat collar. Then he fired point-blank.

The grade did the rest. He descended with a rush, his great body spinning around and around, and coming to rest in a bank of snow before one of the smaller houses.

He was dazed by the breathless slide, and he rested there on the ground for just a moment. The sharp crack of a rifle, and the impact of a bullet striking the ice near by, aroused him.

Tiny David glanced at the open window. Framed in it stood a man clad in convict-gray. He had a rifle in his hand. His face wore a fiendish grin as he bent over the sights, taking careful aim.

Instinctively, Tiny David straightened out so as to offer the smallest target. His hand darted into a pocket, and emerged with a revolver. The reports of the two weapons sounded almost like one.

The bullet from the rifle thudded harmlessly into the wall of the log-house. But the aim of the man on the ground had been better. The convict at the window straightened abruptly. Then he plunged forward, his body a limp form that hung over the windowsill like a grotesque, shapeless bag.

From his companion, hidden in the building, came a laugh, cruel, unreal and blood-curdling.

"One gone!" said Tiny David grimly.

HE used his hands to push himself around the corner of the house to shelter. When he climbed to his feet, he was standing beside a shuttered window at the rear of the dwelling.

"State Police!" he called.

He heard the window open, heard the fastening of the shutter removed. The solid board swung open just a trifle.

"Who be you?" A girl's voice asked the question.

"Lieutenant David, of the State Police."

He opened his coat to show his uniform. There was an instant of delay. Then the shutter swung fully open. A girl in her early teens stood revealed.

"Climb in," she ordered. "God knows how you got here."

Her face softened.

"Maybe God brought you," she added.

He stood in the center of the room, blinking in the smoke that came from a stove burning wood, and watching the girl carefully close the shutter and the window. Near the stove sat an old woman, an open Bible in her hands.

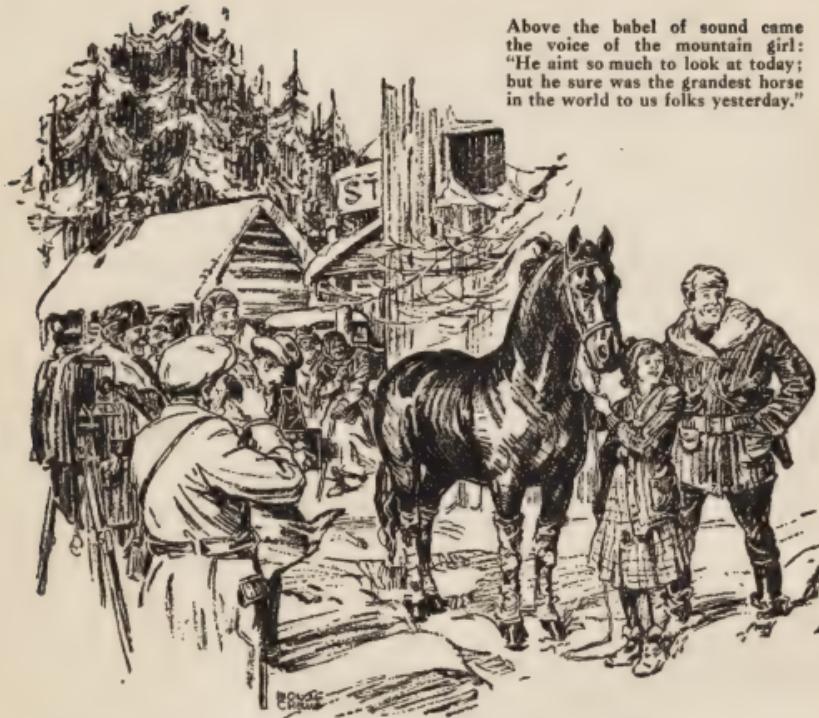
Tiny David turned to the girl.

"Will you tell me what has happened, Miss—"

"Kate is my name," she told him. "Those two crazy convicts showed up about three hours ago and took the store. They killed old man Hunter. There aint nobody here but old people and kids, and when we tried to help old man Hunter, they drove us back."

She indicated a telephone on the wall.

"We had the only phone, 'cept the one at the store. I called the barracks. Just



had time to tell 'em something about it when the line went dead. Guess the storm snapped it. Then we waited. If we went out in front, they would shoot. We could have sneaked out in back, but we wouldn't have got a mile in this storm. All we could do was wait and hope. Then I heard you call—

Tiny David nodded.

"I'll have to wait until dark, and then go in and get the other man." A shadow crossed his face. "But my horse is up at the top of the hill. I couldn't ride him down, and he'll freeze to death before then."

A look of determination crossed the face of the girl.

"I'll bring him in, Mister. There's a trail through the woods that leads in back here and runs around that hill. They won't be able to see me from the store. And we have a shed in back I can put him in. It has a stove, too."

He shook his head.

"You're a brave girl, Kate, but I'll go get him. Tell me where—"

She made a gesture of impatience.

"I know the trail; you don't. They can't see me. Besides, they may need you here."

Above the babel of sound came the voice of the mountain girl: "He aint so much to look at today; but he sure was the grandest horse in the world to us folks yesterday."

He gave grudging assent, watched the girl slip through the window, and then took his post at the front of the house, where he could watch the store through a crack in a shutter. There were no signs of life, and after a considerable period the girl was back.

"He's safe in the shed, Mister. He didn't want to come, but I talked him into it. Gee, he's all cut up. I did what I could for him, and I built a fire. I'll get back to him now." A look of reverence crossed her not unattractive face. "I guess God and him brought you here, Mister."

"I think so, Kate," Lieutenant David admitted.

IT was dark, the early afternoon dark of winter, when Tiny David slipped from the house and began to crawl toward the store. A wild laugh that floated out from the open window halted him.

"I see you!" called a thick voice. "I'm coming to get you."

Then silence. Tiny David stiffened in the snow, gathering his legs under him.

The front door of the store opened. The light from the interior revealed the

second insane convict. In each hand he held a revolver. He ran forward, and shooting as he ran.

Tiny David had got to his feet, but held his fire until a bullet clipped his coat collar.

"I see you, you——!" cried the maniac.

Tiny David fired point-blank at the rushing figure. It halted, fell face-forward and was still.

After that, there was work to do—grim work. The inhabitants of the hamlet, assured the danger was past, aided in it. They were busy with their tasks when they heard a commotion from the top of the hill.

Searchlights were flashing. There was the roar of powerful motors. Blended with all this, was the sound of pick-axes striking ice, and the grating of shovels. But carrying above all else, was a voice, which Tiny David recognized as the property of Sergeant James Crosby:

"Tiny! Tiny! Are you safe, Tiny?"

"Safe and sound," he called back. "All over."

"Thank God!" came the heart-felt answer. "We routed out all the plows and men that weren't nailed down in three counties. But even that was too slow."

"Take it easy," Tiny David advised. "Everything is all right."

Soon the party reached the houses. There were eager questions; hurried answers. Crosby stood with one arm thrown over the broad shoulders of Tiny David. He tried to cover the emotion he felt with brusqueness.

"Damn you, Tiny! You pulled a fine one on me! Ordered me out, and rode in alone to hog all the glory."

Tiny David grinned.

"Couldn't help it, Jim. You were out on your feet."

Crosby nodded sadly.

"Right about now, you and that goat are the most famous man and horse in what is left of this United States of America."

Tiny David wheeled on him.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Newspapers," Crosby replied. "They burned up the wires. They are on their way here now."

"Did you tell them the name of the horse?"

"Sure," Crosby admitted. "I wouldn't hold out on Border King."

"Good Lord!" Tiny David groaned. He explained the order, and what had

happened in the stables, to Crosby. The sergeant turned so his back was facing Tiny David. He bent over.

"Kick me," he ordered.

"Might hurt what little brains you have," Tiny David objected. His face became sober. "Well, I'll take the rap. The Old Man didn't know anything about it, of course. And the stable-



sergeant acted on my orders. But that doesn't save Border King."

"No," Crosby admitted, "it doesn't. And let me add some more good cheer: Major Harner, the big chief, arrived at the barracks late this afternoon. It came over the teletype. You can bet he will be here with the Old Man first thing in the morning, as soon as the roads are open."

"That's just swell!" said Tiny David.

THEY remained at Perrick that night, but they slept very little. The next morning they were up early. Breakfast was hardly out of the way when a procession of motorcars approached.

From the first automobile Major John Harner, superintendent of State Police, alighted, with Captain Field and Captain Hutton. Troopers, reporters, photographers tumbled from the other vehicles.

Tiny David walked toward the officers and saluted. He addressed himself to the superintendent.

"If it please the Major," he began, "this mix-up is entirely my fault. Captain Field knew nothing of it. The stable-sergeant merely obeyed my orders. The whole thing——"

"That will do, Lieutenant." The cold, unemotional voice of Major Harner checked him. "You have showed that

you have very little knowledge of the workings of your own organization." He placed a hand on Tiny David's sleeve, and piloted him away from the group.

"Damn it, man," he demanded, "why can't you youngsters get over the idea that I am some bloodless creature that takes delight in making your lives unpleasant? This is my outfit too; and it so happens I feel about it much the way you do. Now listen to me:

"When Captain Field hinted it might be well to switch horses, he was merely carrying out my suggestion. Captain Hutton and I know that horse as well as we know you, but we were ready to condemn anything you showed us under the name of Border King. I came along because there might be trouble later, and I won't ask any man of mine to do something I won't do."

A smile crossed the face of the Major.

"Then this call came along like an answer to a prayer. We may be short on sentiment, but we are long on tradition. And the horse lived up to the troop horse of tradition. If we condemned him now, we'd have every newspaper in the country on our necks.

"I called the Governor this morning. Sorry, but Border King is through as a troop horse."

His upraised hand halted Tiny David's angry protest.

"He goes to Albany in the spring. There will be a parade, and a ceremony of sorts when the Governor pins the New York State medal for valor on his bridle. Then he goes back to the barracks—not to work, but as a guest for the rest of his life. How does that strike you, Lieutenant?"

Tiny David, grinning, extended his hand. Major Harner grasped it. . . .

"Where is the horse?" The cry came from the photographers and reporters.

Around the corner of the building came Kate, leading Border King. His legs were swathed in crude bandages. His long hair was unkempt, and he was sadly in need of grooming. He limped painfully. But his head was held high, and he whinnied joyfully when he saw Tiny David.

Cameras clicked. Photographers shouted directions. Border King faced it all, calmly and proudly. And above the babel of sound came the clear voice of the mountain girl:

"He aint so much to look at today, Mister; but he sure was the grandest horse in the world to us folks yesterday."

The Sixth Card

*The story of a desperate gam-
ble, vividly told by the author
of "Weird House."*

By FRANCIS
COCKRELL

THAT afternoon a brave friend had died. Stumbling, and pitching forward, in a mix-up at the turn, Red Dog had gone down, a foreleg snapped. There had been dirty riding there, and perhaps a jockey would be set down; but that did not win a purse or bring back a gallant horse which had been destroyed.

Now John Wyatt stood up and moved across the hotel room, standing a moment facing the wall. Then he turned.

"Five hundred is no good," he said again. "Rourke will take the rest of the horses in the morning. There's nothing else to do."

Deane didn't answer for a moment. She was very beautiful, sitting there; as beautiful now as she had ever been, or more: the warm whiteness of her skin, the dark gleam of her hair, the soft pale V of her throat against the sheen of black kimono.

"I'd rather—I'd hoped we'd never—" she began, and stopped. Then she looked up at him and smiled a little smile. "If you say there's nothing else to do," she told him simply, "there's nothing else." She rose from where she had been sitting on the bed and crossed the room to him, taking both his hands in hers. "Good luck!" she said.

JOHN WYATT came from the St. Charles Hotel and walked towards Canal Street. It was nine o'clock. Fog hung in the night air, and a thin drizzle fell through it, glimmering in the light from street lamps. Wyatt walked with neither haste nor indecision, his hands deep in his pockets of his coat.

Four weeks they'd been running in

Illustrated by
Peter Kuhlhoff



"This is a pretty big pot," he said. "I'd like to think a minute. I think better with a bite to eat."

New Orleans now, four weeks in which ill luck had never left their side. Rain had gushed suddenly to drench a track on which, dry, their horse Spade Flush would handily have won. And Spade Flush had strained a tendon in that race and would not run again for ten days more. There had been no money then, and Rourke had let them have five hundred. A week later an unknown, a long shot, had run six furlongs too fast; and there had gone a race which they had counted won.... Things like that. But there were always feed and stable hire and entry fees; hotel-bills and dinner-checks. Rourke had let him have another thousand.

Tomorrow the bookmaker, Rourke, accepting receipt of fifteen hundred dollars and the seventy-five which was his fee, would take the three horses left in their little stable now. Tomorrow was the date he had set, and that was the date he meant. It was not heartlessness or greed, perhaps, with Rourke; this was simply a part of his business; and in business Rourke broke no rules and recognized no friends....

Crossing Canal, John Wyatt walked down Royal Street. In a room at the hotel, alone, Deane sat waiting for him to return with the money they had to have: Deane, who had turned her back on advice, and on a father she loved, and on an inheritance, to marry him.

He had quit gambling then; she had wanted him to. But he would have stopped anyhow; for Deane was not meant to be a gambler's wife. Racing—

that was a gamble too. But it was something else. There are no traditions of honor or gentlemanliness a professional gambler can think of or live up to.

And now Deane sat in a hotel room alone, waiting for him quietly and confidently. But John Wyatt knew that there was some god of gambling who ruled it a rare thing for a man to win when he had to win; and he knew that tomorrow they might be not only without a stable, but without a dollar.

Still his mouth was relaxed and impulsive, and none of this showed in his eyes. For John Wyatt had gone to a school that gave its grades in dollars, and he who made a window of his face got low grades. Five years in that school—John Wyatt was twenty-nine now; and then he had met Deane Prentice. Well, it was gone; it was four years gone. Except for tonight's brief return.

WYATT went through swinging doors and past a bar, on into a farther room. He leaned for a moment against the wall, and looked around.

Smoke was heavy in the air; the low click of chips and hum of voices rose in it suddenly, and died there without going farther. There were tables with men around them. A smaller bar than the one in the other room ran along one wall, its end stacked generously with free lunch.

Presently Wyatt walked to a table in the corner and watched the four men play a moment. Then he said: "What are the chips, gents?"

A heavy man who had been addressed as Jake looked up. "Five, twenty-five and fifty," he said, after scrutinizing Wyatt carefully. He was evidently the official house man, and sold the chips.

Wyatt's eyes swept the table briefly. "There is three thousand in the game," he said. "I'll buy five hundred. My name is John."

Jake looked at the others. "Pull up a chair and sit down, John. Take off your coat." He pointed to the others. "Dan, Luke and Morris," he said.

Wyatt nodded and pulled up a chair. "I'll keep it on," he said. "I've got a little cold." His voice was not hoarse.

He bought his chips then, and they played. He won a little and lost a little, and then began to win again. A new deck came into the game, and John Wyatt saw that the cards were marked. But there was no indication of this in his play. He called three bets when, by reading the backs of the cards, he could plainly see that he was beat. Twice he got out before large bets, when he had the winning hand; but those pots weren't large; and presently he called two heavy raises, which had been bluffs, to win. Between times luck sat on his shoulders, and he won.

But he had seen enough. Obviously Jake and Dan could read the cards. Luke and Morris couldn't. But it didn't matter. He had seen enough, and he would rather have his gambling straight. He would find another game.

"Gents," he said, at the end of a hand, looking levelly at Jake, "I think I've had enough. I'll cash in." Eight hundred dollars lay in front of him.

"Don't be in a hurry," Jake said easily. "Stick around awhile. It'd be a dirty trick to check out when you're three hundred in us. Anyhow," he added, "I'm hungry, and I don't like to play poker whilst I eat. Let's knock off for twenty minutes, men." And with his eyes on Wyatt, he dropped the deck into the cuspidor at his side.

The others agreed and went to the bar for sandwiches. John Wyatt shrugged and sat back in his chair. If the man wanted to play an honest game, it suited him; he was as well off here as anywhere.

JAKE had gone into the front room with Dan. They leaned on the bar, close together.

"He's reading them," Jake said softly. "Playing dumb. He's only lost small bets, but he called those two big pots."

"That's right," Dan said. "He's reading them."

"Now's the time," Jake said. "We'll pluck that five and the three he's in the game. We'll spring it."

"He's not too smart?" Dan asked cautiously.

"No one is," Jake said. "I tell you it's new; it's not been done. It's mine, and it's made for this. Joe's got the deck; it's ready. Get hold of Sloppy and get him set. He knows. The tip is when I call for a new deck. You deal. I cut. Sloppy plays the hand. Let's get back now."

THEY were playing again, five minutes later. John Wyatt played as impassively as before. The cards they were using were not marked now. Luck still rode in his saddle, and Wyatt's chips grew past the thousand-dollar mark.

A man ambled up to the table sometime later and looked on awhile. He was a careless-looking man, his flabby face without much animation.

"Mind if I sit in?" he asked them presently. He sounded as though it didn't matter much to him one way or the other.

The others looked at him blankly, and Jake said discouragingly: "Five, twenty-five and fifty. Table stakes."

"I'll take a thousand," was the answer, and he pulled the money from the pockets of his shabby clothes. "Call me Sloppy," he said, sitting down. "Everyone does."

He got his chips, and the game went on. He played an indifferent game of poker; he made two childish bets. But, losing, he didn't seem to mind. He bought more chips.

A little later, on his own deal, Jake lost a fair-sized pot to Dan, who sat on his left.

"Joe!" Jake bellowed. He cursed heavily and tore the cards. "Joe! Bring a deck."

Joe, who was the bartender in that room, got a deck from the shelf behind the bar and came to the table with it.

Dan opened the deck and shuffled. His fingers, to most people, might have seemed clumsy. Jake cut. Dan dealt.

Sloppy, on Dan's left, opened the pot. Luke called. John Wyatt saw three kings, a four-spot and an ace. He raised. His raise was called around the board.

Then John Wyatt noticed the cards more closely, and saw that the deck was marked again. Dan was dealing at the time.

Sloppy took two cards, Luke one. Wyatt took two, and it went on around the board.

Sloppy looked at his cards and bet one hundred dollars. Luke stayed. John Wyatt saw four kings and a six, and raised the bet three hundred dollars. The others dropped out, around to Sloppy.

Sloppy, looking at his cards again, put them face down upon the table. "Mister," he said drowsily, "I think right highly of my hand. I'll see that, and raise *you* three."

He shoved the chips to the center and then slumped listlessly back in his chair, watching Wyatt indifferently. Luke got out.

John Wyatt surveyed the pot and leaned back in his chair deliberately; but his thoughts were racing through his mind hard on each other's heels.

EIGHT hundred in his stack; fifteen hundred in the pot, and eighteen if he called. And twenty-eight altogether if he raised it five and Sloppy called. Enough. More than enough. Enough to pay Rourke, and leave them money to get on their feet again. *If* he won!

But he had seen the backs of Sloppy's cards. Marked as the other deck had been, and judging from his own hand, Sloppy had three aces and two jacks. A full house.

His four kings would beat that; but John Wyatt liked to play straight poker. He had money in the pot, and he had to protect that. But if Sloppy couldn't read the cards—and why would he raise if he could?—Wyatt would be cheating if he raised now. He would be betting on a certain knowledge that he had and Sloppy didn't have.

It was a new deck, though; he couldn't be sure all the markings were the same. Still, the only thing that could beat four kings would be either a straight flush or four aces. And people do not draw two cards to a straight flush, or make it if they do. Nor could Sloppy have four aces, for he himself had discarded one before the draw.

The situation amounted, then, either to the fact that Sloppy had a full house and thought too highly of it, not being able to read the backs of cards, or else—What else? Abruptly there came into Wyatt's mind a clear picture of Jake's studied reluctance in admitting Sloppy to the game, of Dan shuffling, of Jake cutting the cards and Dan dealing. . . . If Sloppy could read the cards, if he was

working with Jake and Dan? But what then? How would that—

John Wyatt carefully picked up his cards, and holding them close against his chest, felt them once again with fingers which had not lost all their sensitiveness, and looked at them again with eyes which for all their expression might have been staring at blank sheets of paper.

Then he closed his hand together again and held it a moment still close against his chest, looking thoughtfully at the pot. He absently put the hand face down upon the table and set a stack of chips on it.

"You'll pardon me," he said. "This is a pretty big pot. I'd like to think a minute. There's a question of ethics—" He rose. "I think better at times with a bite to eat," he said; and stepping to the bar, he fixed himself a sandwich from the free lunch, keeping his eyes, though, constantly on his cards.

He bit largely into the sandwich, chewed and swallowed, and came back to his chair. He sat down, staring at the pot. He took another bite of sandwich.

"You've more than five hundred, haven't you?" he said to Sloppy; though at one glance he could count the stack.

Sloppy merely nodded. "Sure, sure," Jake said. "He's got it."

"Let's not be impatient," Wyatt said, biting again on the sandwich. He counted his chips slowly. He stuffed the remainder of the sandwich into his mouth.

HE shoved chips toward the center of the table. He swallowed the last of the sandwich and said: "I call, and raise five hundred and fifteen dollars." His last chip was in the pot.

"Call," Sloppy said, and put the money forward. "I have an ace full." He spread his hand.

"And I have four kings," John Wyatt said. "Sorry, friend." He turned his cards over and reached for the pot.

"Wait a minute," Sloppy stopped him. "You got six cards in your hand."

"Has he?" It was Jake. "You know, I thought I seen six."

"Yeah," Dan said. "It's tough. Sure is. I don't know how I ever come to deal you an extra. Musta been stuck together. I'm sorry as hell. Couldn't say nothing after the betting started, though, of course."

Six cards! A worthless hand, in any poker game. No matter if he had a royal flush, with six cards Wyatt's hand was nothing. Any hand would beat it.

The others—Jake and Dan and Sloppy—were all reaching for the hand, reaching to spread it and show six cards.

But John Wyatt was standing now; and he put his hand, fingers widespread, over his cards.

"Just a minute, gentlemen: If I've six cards, the hand is dead. If not, I win. *Keep your hands back there!*" Something they had not heard before was in his voice, and their hands drew back.

"I'll count them," Wyatt said. "You can watch." His right hand was shoved into the pocket of his gabardine coat; but with his left he picked up a card. He wrinkled it, bent it and showed it to all. He dropped it on the chips.

"One," he said. He did that with the others until he said "five," and dropped the fifth card on the chips.

There were no cards left. Five were there—and only five.

His hand reached out for the chips.

"Wait a minute, buddy," Jake said very distinctly. "I seen six cards. You can't come in here and cheat an honest—"

"That's right," Dan broke in. "If he don't wanna stand up for himself, we'll stand up for him. We're here to see fair play and—"

"Sit back!" John Wyatt said softly, and moved his right hand, deep in the pocket of the coat. "I had five cards. I win the hand. Don't tempt me to spoil the pocket of this coat. I couldn't miss at this range. Cash those chips."

THAT'S all he said. The others saw that hand, and saw his eyes; they heard his voice, and they sat there while Jake sullenly cashed the chips, and John Wyatt stuffed the money into his pockets—with his left hand. His right hand didn't move. It didn't have to.

He went out then. He didn't hurry. But no one moved till he was gone. All other games had stopped; all other sound had ceased, while the end of that hand took place.

Now for a moment silence continued. Then it broke all at once, and there was a confused murmur and babble in the room, through which nothing could be distinguished until Jake roared at Dan:

"You dubbed it! Why, you damn' clumsy little—"

"I didn't!" Dan shouted. "I didn't. He had six cards. I dealt 'em, and I don't miss a cinch like that. Look!" And he picked up a card and showed a tiny rough spot on its back. "That's where they was stuck together. You

think I couldn't feel it, even with a new deck, when I was looking for it? It was there, I tell you, when I dealt. And he wouldn't feel it either, unless he was looking for it."

"Who was he, anyhow?" Sloppy asked, no longer listless.

"Name's Wyatt, I think," said a mild little man who was leaning against the bar. "He could palm a card with anyone, I guess, in his day. Thought he'd quit playing, though. Got married or something, I think."

Jake let his eyes come back to the table and stared emptily at it a moment. "He couldn't have been looking for it," he said, "because I thought it up. But even if he was, what did he do with it? 'Cause he never even had a hand close to a pocket till after all the bets. He couldn't palm one from me that long."

Sloppy, counting the cards, looked up.

"That's what I want to know," he said. "What he did with it. There's only fifty-one cards here. Some slickers!" he said disgustedly, and stalked out.

NOT long after that, back in the hotel, John Wyatt sat on the bed beside his wife. Her lap was full of money.

"And so," he was saying, "I was faced with a little problem. I had to call, to protect the money already bet. But without the sixth card I had a sure thing. So could I raise? For even if Sloppy was on it, he was betting on something he thought was true, but that I knew wasn't. But, I thought, is cheating a cheater, in a case like—"

"Of course, of course!" Deane said impatiently. "Certainly they were trying to cheat you." She couldn't restrain herself. "But what did you do with the card?"

"And so," he went on calmly, his mouth twitching just a little at the corners, as he watched the exasperated expression on her face, "I decided it would be all right if I raised. I hope," he added, "that you won't think I let our need of money sway me too strongly."

"John Wyatt," his wife said sternly, "if you don't tell me what you did with that card, I'm going to go raving mad and scream like a banshee. Right this minute."

He chuckled. "I ate it," he said, and kissed her in spite of her gasp. "I put it in the sandwich and ate it." Then he added: "Very good it was, too. If I have a touch of indigestion—well, it's worth it."



Arms and Men

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

V—Wet Fire

WEt fire?" I repeated, frowning. "Why, I never heard of such a thing!"

"Proving you aint got a college education!"—and my old friend Martin Burnside chuckled. He paused to light his pipe. His eye flicked lovingly about his library, whose walls were hung with all sorts of queer weapons. Then he peered at me again.

"You know all about some kind of fires," he said ironically. "If I mentioned *muñiga*, say, or 'wood' with the proper Texan accent, you'd throw back your ears and brag how much you know. You're one of these particular birds who always puts in the accents when he writes Spanish. But I bring up a historical subject, and you're all at sea."

He abandoned his half-mocking manner and leaned forward, looking at me over his spectacles and speaking with great earnestness.

"My dear fellow, wet fire was one of the biggest and strangest things in all history, so far as arms and men were concerned. It was invented in the Seventh Century A. D. and has been a mystery ever since. It changed the course of world wars. Why, Greek fire was nothing to it."

"Oh, Greek fire!" I exclaimed. "Petroleum, saltpeter, and so forth—"

"Tut, tut! Saltpeter wasn't even known till the Thirteenth Century," he broke in. "And I'm not talking about Greek fire at all; most people confuse the two things. I said *wet* fire; that, or *sea* fire, was its proper name. Wet fire, my boy, wet fire! Now I'll show you something."

From the wall he took down a curious, broken piece of very old bronze. What it was, I did not know. Martin Burnside had always refused to say, claiming that he was not sure, himself. But I saw now that he was sure enough.

"This," he said almost reverently, "is a piece of a siphon. It was found during some excavations near Constantinople, on the side of the dockyard of the Byzantine emperors. Experts in bronze assign it to the middle of the Seventh Century. And there's something else about it I won't show you now—not now. Wait a bit."

He replaced the broken, worn, almost shapeless bit of metal on the wall, then returned to his desk. From a huge envelope he took a batch of photostats and typed sheets, and regarded me with an exultant leer.

"Here's something good; scoff all you like. Last year, a university expedition in Greece brought back from a Greek monastery a hitherto unknown work of the Patriarch Nicephorus, dating from about the year 800. It was a history of the Greek Emperor Constantine Pogonatus, who died in 685. A friend of mine at the university has sent me photostats of certain pages, with a translation. See what you get out of them, my boy. Forget the big names, and stick your nose into the story; and when you get through, I'll show you something about this bronze fragment. God bless you!"

WEET fire? The apparent paradox fascinated and puzzled me. So did the story under my hand, which made the blood run faster; a story of days when the world was upheaving, when Constantinople was still Roman, still mistress of half the earth, and against her were pouring the masses of the new Saracen faith. A day of strong men, when the Caliph Moawiah led the hosts of Islam over the ashes of empires, and against him stood out Constantine, and forced him to pay tribute.

And stronger than caliph or emperor, destined to outlive them across the ages, was the man who sat one morning in the year 670 in a portico outside the Palace of Justinian, gazing with moody eyes down the hillside at the glittering waters of the Sea of Marmora. Soiled and torn were his garments, but his vigorous features were chiseled as from marble, and the scroll of paper in his hand gave him a curious note to the eye.

A tall, brawny figure came out of the palace and halted. A bearded man clad in a rather shabby tunic, this; massive features, deep eyes for one scarce twenty-five, and an air of energy and decision. He turned to the man sitting in the portico and spoke.

"Well, stranger? Sitting idle in the sunlight this fine day?"

"Aye, and for many a day," returned the other bitterly. "Your purple-clad Emperor has no time for strangers, and I have no money to bribe the chamberlain, so I rot outside and starve. And for lack of me, the empire passes into the hand of Moawiah."

"You think well of yourself," said the bearded man, with a hard, shrewd look.

"So does your Emperor, with less reason," was the curt retort.

The bearded man broke into a laugh, and seated himself.

"Come, you haven't the look of a madman despite your words. I'm called Pogonatus, the bearded, because I'm something of a seaman and have no time for shaving, and no respect for custom. Who are you? Perhaps I can lend a hand, comrade. I've a bit of influence around here. What's that paper in your hand?"

"That? The salvation of the empire—and scorned." The stranger flung down the rolled paper and put his foot on it. Then he broke into a swift, flashing smile. "Forgive my speech, friend Pogonatus; you're the first man to give me a kind word in this accursed city. I'm Callinicus, an architect, of Heliopolis in Syria—a fugitive from the infidel host. I beat my way here to Constantinople, but might as well hope to interview the moon as your Emperor."

"True, he's a queer fellow," agreed Pogonatus. "You have information for him?"

Callinicus nodded, a flash leaping into his gray eyes.

"Such information as would save his empire and blast the Arab fleet. Also, I have sure news of it, and of the preparations Moawiah is making."

"Good." Pogonatus came to his feet. "I have a command in the emperor's fleet; in fact, I was in Sicily with him last year when he reconquered that island. I've a natural interest in your information. Come along with me to my apartment and get something to eat. I've seen that pinched look in a face ere this."

With a thrill of joy, Callinicus picked up his paper and accompanied the other into the palace. Obviously, Pogonatus was well known here, for guards saluted as he passed, and Callinicus commented on it. The other laughed grimly.

"Aye, they'd better salute, the lazy dogs! If I had my way, I'd see 'em all on the frontiers and at work. . . . But here we are."

CALLINICUS found himself in an apartment anything but luxurious. On the tables and about the place were ship models, architects' plans, naval reports. Two scribes were at work. Pogonatus brusquely dismissed them, and almost at once slaves were bringing in trays of wine and food.

"Pitch in," ordered Pogonatus, "and don't stand on ceremony. I'll take some of those grapes, just to keep you company. Well, what woman stands back of you?"



Illustrated by Hervé Stein

"Woman?" Callinicus frowned at him. "I don't understand."

"Bah! Women motivate everything in this world, my friend; even if a man be a pillared monk, his life is none the less swung on the axle of woman. Married?"

"No." Callinicus laughed, and spoke between bites. "Too busy. Those damned Moslems swept away all I had, and I barely escaped with life."

The other grunted. "All right; I stick to what I said. You'll see. Is it true that Moawiah is building a fleet? Those Arabs are devilish good seamen."

"Splendid," assented Callinicus. "Yes. The Caliph is outfitting a tremendous fleet. What's more, word is abroad that his first objective is Cyzicus, which he'll then use as a base of operations against Constantinople. He has sworn to take it, so it is said."

"Say no word to Pogonatus or any other person here of having seen me," she said.

Pogonatus spat out a volley of seamen's oaths.

"And none of our spies have learned this! Blast 'em all. Cyzicus, eh?"

He rummaged through a pile of documents and produced a chart, and fell to studying it in silence, while Callinicus ate ravenously. . . .

Cyzicus, one of the first cities of the empire after Constantinople, lay on the Asia Minor coast—an island connected with the mainland by a wide causeway, and of huge maritime importance. Yes, with this place in his hands, the Arab Caliph would have a base of operations that would stagger Constantinople.

"What about that paper?" broke out Pogonatus. "A plan of campaign?"

"No. A new weapon," and Callinicus sipped his wine. The uplifting thrust of this friendship, this sure means of reaching the inaccessible Emperor, had made him a new man.

The other eyed him half-admiringly, but shook his head.

"A new weapon? Bah! In a month's time those Arabs would be using it against us."

"Not this." Callinicus laughed. A new ring of confidence, of assurance, came into his voice. "I alone know the secret. No one else can discover it. I'll not impart it to a living soul—not to the Emperor himself! This paper? Plans for a bronze siphon, that's all, that turns

water into fire. The formula remains in my head alone."

"Turns water into fire?" Pogonatus stared. "Madness!"

"So the palace chamberlain said," and Callinicus chuckled. From a tray he took a decanter of rare Cretan glass, emptied it into his wine-cup, and held it up. "Look at this! To make a siphon requires time. But I can fill this with my preparation in half an hour, throw it into a boat that has water in the hold—and the water becomes a roaring hell of flame. Try me, if you doubt it."

"By God, I will!" cried Pogonatus, leaping up. "Wait; I must attend the Emperor; I'll turn you over to slaves. Bathe, dress yourself properly, shave—I'll be back in an hour or so. Then we'll put you to the test. Agreed?"

"With all my heart!" cried Callinicus eagerly. "You're a great fellow, Pogonatus, a great fellow! I can't thank you enough—"

He gripped hands with the bearded Greek, a flush in his cheek, a warmth of gratitude in his eye. Pogonatus clapped him on the shoulder, and was gone.

AN hour later, shaved, bathed, clad in fine robes, Callinicus sat at one of the tables, eagerly going over his plans for the bronze siphon. Without warning, the curtains were parted and a woman came into the apartment. A young woman, lovely beyond words, glimmering with silk and jewels, who stood gazing wide-eyed as Callinicus rose.

"You—who are you?" she demanded, slowly coming forward.

He laughed lightly.

"Callinicus, lady. A friend of the sea-captain who dwells here."

"Pogonatus? Where is he?"

"Gone to attend the Emperor, he said. Will you wait? He returns shortly."

"Oh!" A flash of laughter lit her face, then was gone. So sunny were her blue eyes, so lovely and heart-quickening was her look, that the pulses of Callinicus leaped and he could not take his gaze from her. She turned and went to the entrance, parted the curtains, and hastily dismissed women or slaves who had remained outside. Then she came back, snuggled down amid some cushions, and a touch of rare perfume filled the nostrils of Callinicus.

"Were this not a Christian city," he said admiringly, "I would take you for some goddess come to earth. You are the most lovely thing I ever beheld."

Her blue eyes warmed under this naïve compliment.

"I am the Lady Eunice. Ask me no more, I beg you; no more! Forget everything. Tell me who you are, all about yourself. I am curious! You're a seaman like Pogonatus?"

"Heaven forbid! An architect, a poor fugitive from Syria!" And Callinicus laughed. His work shoved aside, he plunged into talk with her. Almost from the first, they were upon a footing of intimacy, of mutual liking and attraction. As by magic, the whole course of his life had changed in an hour or so, thought Callinicus.

Never had he met a woman so cultured, of such loveliness and spirit; she swept him away before he knew it. And to this splendid creature of the palace, the Syrian architect was like a man from another world. His frankness and energy, his friendly whimsicality, his very genius, delighted her. And his open admiration was by no means displeasing. Finally she rose from her cushions abruptly, realizing how time had passed.

"I must fly!" she exclaimed, then came to him and caught his hands, and looked him in the face. "Listen to me, Callinicus. Say no word to Pogonatus or any other person here of having seen me—swear it!"

"If you so command, Lady Eunice."

"I do, I do! For my sake and your own. This place is filled with spies and with intrigue. If I see you again, it must be secretly—look at this ring, remember it!"—and she held up her hand to show a carven agate ring. "You can trust anyone who bears it; trust no one else. Every day men are slain here, and women too. Our friendship might bring disaster upon me, upon Pogonatus, upon yourself and others. For I belong to the royal house of Constantine, my friend. Remember!"

THEN she was gone, and Callinicus sat as in a dream until, with a quick step, Pogonatus strode in, wearing splendid armor. He flung it off with an oath.

"Court duties—damn them! Ah, you look better; a new man, indeed! Ready for the test? I'm free for a bit. Give me a list of what materials you need."

"It is already written." Callinicus handed him a paper. Calling a guard, Pogonatus sent him to get the required materials, after scanning the paper swiftly. "So! Then this is your secret?"

Callinicus smiled. "The secret is in

the mixing, not in the ingredients, my friend. And I have not put the chief ingredient there. I will get that myself, now."

"All right." The other took a heavy ring from his finger. "Take this, and it will pass you through the guards. Speak to no one, trust no one; you'll need money? Here's gold—oh, take the purse, man, all of it! Buy anything you fancy. Do you wish guards or slaves to carry the ingredients?"

Callinicus shook his head, and took his departure.

This strange adventure into which he had been flung, partook of the nature of a dream; he could scarce believe that he was walking through the vast Palace of Justinian, that the guards who stopped him, saluted briskly at sight of the ring; that to him, the refugee and starving wanderer of the morning, these palace precincts were now open in every quarter. And the face, the laughing eyes, the warm liking, of the Lady Eunice abode with him and cheered him on.

HE went into the markets of the city, into the quarter of the masons, and came back again carrying a small goat-skin sack. When he had found his way through the maze of the palace to the simple apartment of Pogonatus, he discovered with the latter a number of bronzed seamen and court nobles.

Quite obviously, these men had been talking up the absurdity of the thing proposed by the stranger. The manner of Pogonatus was rather curt.

"How soon can you be ready, Callinicus?"

"In a few moments." Callinicus looked at the skins on the floor, bearing sulphur, pitch, naphtha and the other things he had ordered. "But I must make my mixture in private."

"The place is yours. Take everything into the other room that fronts the water. Here, slaves! Carry as directed, and obey."

Callinicus picked up the thin glass bottle, and carried it into the room whose terrace overlooked the sea. The slaves brought in the other things and left him alone. His mixture perfected, he filled the bottle and stoppered it. Bottle in one hand, and a little of the mixture in his other palm, he returned to the larger chamber. The seamen regarded him doubtfully; the nobles, who by reason of their rank commanded ships, looked distinctly down their noses at him.



"This wet fire burns anything save iron."

"All ready," he said cheerfully, and spilled what was in his hand about one leg of the table. Then, pouring wine, he drank, and emptied the cup upon the stone floor. There was a flash. Instantly flames were licking up about the table-leg, while the men drew back in swift alarm. Callinicus regarded them with a quick smile.

"So, doubters! There's a sample for you. Ready, Pogonatus?"

The latter grunted assent. A murmur of "Witchcraft!" went around; the others now avoided Callinicus as though he had the plague. So, with Pogonatus at his elbow, he walked down through the palace gardens to the little harbor below, and the other men followed in doubt and wonder. Arrived at the great stone quay, Pogonatus pointed to a splendid galley tied below them.

"There's six inches of water in her," he said. "That's the Emperor's galley. She's made of ebony wood from Ethiopia which is difficult to burn. If you seek an easier test, say the word."

Callinicus shrugged. "It matters not to me, but suppose the galley is destroyed? The Emperor may have a word for you that you'll not like."

"I'll risk it," and through his beard showed the flashing white teeth of Pogonatus as he grinned. "Go ahead, and the Emperor be hanged!"

Callinicus hurled the glass flask into the midships section of the barge, where water showed. The bottle burst asunder. There was a flash of white fire, and instantly the flames lapped up at the gilded sides of the galley, and spread along the water.

"Stand back!" shouted Pogonatus angrily, as his followers cried out in alarm, and slaves and guards came running to quench the flames. "Stand

back! We'll see whether this is fire that dies out in a flash, or whether it has teeth."

Callinicus smiled and stood waiting. The fire had teeth, no doubt of that. The flames increased, took hold upon the dark wood beneath the gilding, and in a little the whole galley was a mass of flames from end to end. Pogonatus darted one glance at the bronzed seamen and the elegantly clad nobles, and waved his arm.

"You have seen? Then go home and think about it, my friends. The test is made. Guards! Draw back and allow no one here. Sit down, Callinicus. The palace is yours. The fleet is yours. The world is yours, blast it all! Sit down and tell me what you propose doing with this damnable, glorious material of yours."

Laughing, Callinicus seated himself beside the other, on a bench that stood there, and told of his plans. He did not have his scroll of paper here, but needed it not.

"The siphon which I have devised will shoot forth this material to perhaps fifty feet," he said. "As it is shot out, a hose from a water-engine pumps water into the barrel of the siphon; thus, a solid stream of wet flame is emitted. As water touches the material, it becomes fire, you comprehend."

"Good, good," approved Pogonatus. "But suppose, my friend, that you were in command of our ships here; and the fleet of the Caliph Moawiah was pressing into the harbor—how would you use this invention of yours?"

CALLINICUS leaned forward and traced two circles, one inside the other. "Here is a hollow glass ball, filled with water and sealed. Outside it is another, filled with my material; or reverse the two. These may be hurled by hand, or from ballista or other engines. They break upon landing and burst into flame; or with the siphon the matter is easier still. Arab seamen conquer by hand-to-hand fighting, by laying alongside the enemy and overwhelming them with men. Well, anchor a dozen warships out yonder in the fairway, let most of the soldiers keep below, and when the Arab ships sweep alongside, pump wet fire into them! It burns man or wood, animal or any other thing, save iron. And when—"

"I see, I see!" Pogonatus cried out in a loud voice, a shining exultation in his vigorous features. "Ah, Callinicus, to-

day is born undying history!" And he fell into a reverie, staring out wide-eyed upon the water where the ruins of the galley smoked and hissed in the shallows.

"Today is born something else as well, it may be," said Callinicus after a while. "Queer! This morning you mentioned women to me, and I laughed; but now—"

HE checked himself. Pogonatus wakened from his dream, turned, and regarded him with a chuckling laugh, then nudged him in the ribs.

"So! Over turns the wheel of fortune, and up comes a pretty face, eh? Good for you. I like a man that's human. We've the pick of the world in Constantinople, my friend; name her, and I'll see that she's yours! Upon my word and honor."

"You mean it? You'll help me?" Callinicus turned eagerly to him, then remembered his oath. His eager eyes closed. "But I swore to keep her name secret."

"Oh-ho!" laughed Pogonatus. "You've spoken with her, eh?"

"Yes." The gray eyes of Callinicus were radiant, his face was transfigured in its clear-cut joy. "The loveliest creature on this earth, Pogonatus; never have I seen a woman so marvelous, so filled with glowing spirit and quick wit. Almost from the first moment, we were friends, we understood each other—it seems too wonderful to be true. Perhaps I deceived myself—but no. She promised to see me in secret—"

"Sounds like palace intrigue!"—and Pogonatus chuckled in his beard. "Well, God knows the fine ladies of the palace have less virtue and are more easily won than the girls in the streets—provided one knows how! I congratulate you on quick work, my friend. Come, I've sworn to help you; no secrets! Her name?"

Callinicus looked at him, and constraint was broken down in this warm friendliness which went to his heart.

"I can trust you, of course. Her name is Eunice."

"Eunice!" And a laugh burst from Pogonatus. "Why, half the women in Constantinople are named Eunice, from the Empress down to the prostitutes! Give us a better lead than that. Who is she? Of what rank? Where did you see her?"

"I know only her name," said Callinicus, rapt with joy. "She came into your apartment while you were gone. But I'll know her again, anywhere."

Pogonatus turned half away, stooped over, and pretended to be fastening the latchet of his sandal. The merry humor died out of his bearded features. His eyes chilled and hardened, his lips set in a thin line.

"To my apartment?" he repeated in a low voice. "Strange! I can't imagine who—"

"She wore a ring of carven agate, by which I was to know her messenger."

Pogonatus caught his breath; for an instant he sat as though paralyzed. Then he came to his feet.

"Well, enough of this!" he exclaimed, his voice harsh and rasping. "If you don't see her again, we'll find her. Now, back to business, my friend. You have the ring I gave you? Keep it; at any hour of the day or night, it will give you instant access to the Emperor. It will open all doors to you, place all authority in your hand. I'm going to send you immediately, here and now, to take full charge of the dockyards just around the point yonder."

"You?" exclaimed Callinicus. The other brushed his word aside and went on.

"You're in full charge. The engineers, the artisans, the architects, are yours to command. I'm assigning a dozen guards to protect you day and night; remember, your life is important to the empire! Let me see; the little palace of Constans near the dockyards—yes, you shall have it. I'll see about it within the hour and have it placed in your name. You'll need slaves—fifty will do. For money, call upon my treasurer; any order bearing your name and seal will be paid instantly. The chief of the glass-makers' guild will place himself at your disposal in the morning. What I want from you, my friend, and what I want at once, is just one thing: results! Do you comprehend?"

Callinicus stared at him, wide-eyed.

"Good heavens, man! Why, you talk like a madman—or the Emperor!"

"I AM the Emperor," said Pogonatus calmly. "Constantine, whom people in the street call Pogonatus. As regards that lady, have no fear; I keep my word, and your confidence is sacred. Oh, yes—the designs for your siphon! I'll have them sent to you at once. Now go, take charge of your palace and your dockyards, and good luck go with you!"

He put out his hand, gripped that of the speechless Callinicus, and strode

away. Five minutes later, a court chamberlain, a guard officer, and a chief scribe were conducting Callinicus to his new domain and beseeching his orders. And the graven ring, still on his finger, was a magic that laid at his feet the power of the Emperor Constantine himself.

Thus began the great dream of Callinicus, as the chronicler Nicephorus termed it in fitting words. In a day, the refugee Syrian architect became the greatest man in Constantinople, save only the Emperor himself; and the Emperor was too busy to bother about him. For the news he had brought was true. The Caliph Moawiah, yearning for the conquest of the whole world and seeking to turn his Arab dominion into a great sea-power, was preparing a deluge with which to wash away the Roman empire of the east.

SEAMAN and captain as he was, the Emperor made all haste to meet the threat by land, and that by water he left to Callinicus. Often he came to the vast dockyard and there watched private tests of the engines, or conferred with Callinicus upon moot points, or inspected the galleys and ships as they were equipped with the water-engines and siphons. Men were trained in working these things, and a huge store of the wet fire was being laid up; but no man knew what composed it, save one.

"And when you die, as some day you must, what then?" asked the Emperor as he talked with Callinicus one afternoon. "Suppose you were slain now, by Arab spies, or," he added, with a sharp glance at the architect, "by some palace intrigue. With you, the empire would lose your secret."

"That is true," said Callinicus thoughtfully. "I have already made provision against such a thing. How? Not now; another time, perhaps," and he smiled. "I'll tell you when the time's ripe."

"Think well; death strikes sharply," said the Emperor curtly. "Now another thing. I have just learned that in another item of your news, you were right. The Caliph is sending a third of his fleet, the largest and best of his ships, against Cyzicus, hoping to strike swiftly and secretly. The blow falls within three weeks. We must send to meet it at once."

"Fifty ships can set forth in three days from now," said Callinicus.

"Good! Splendid! We'll go with them, you and I—so it's settled. By the way,

what of the lady, my friend?"—and he smiled strangely upon Callinicus. "You've not appealed to me for help. Have things gone so well with you?"

"Well enough, Lord," said Callinicus, beaming happily. "And if this greater test succeeds as did the first, then I shall ask a reward of you. Though," he went on in some confusion, "the lady is not aware of it. And when I speak of marriage—"

The Emperor broke into hearty laughter.

"Good! You shall have your reward, I promise you! Do you know who she is, then?"

"No,"—and a troubled look came into the fine gray eyes of Callinicus. "Strange

and strange manner, but he had no time to waste on wondering. Within three days the fleet must sail. . . .

In these weeks, indeed, Callinicus had yielded to love—a consuming, powerful love that had become the greatest thing in his life. Eunice loved him; he knew this beyond any doubt. Sometimes he had gone to the palace, led by one of her women. At other times she had come to the palace which was now his. Except that she was a lady of rank, he knew little or nothing about her, nor cared. His whole existence had become wrapped up in her. When he spoke of marriage, she hushed him quickly, and trembled. It was death for any such man as the architect to love one of the royal family.



The yell to Allah died out in shrieks as spouts of living flame swept the boarders ready to leap.

as it may seem, I do not know, except that she is some great lady of the palace. I've been too busy to make inquiries; besides, I've sworn an oath."

"Keep your oaths," said the Emperor, "and I'll keep mine. You shall have the greatest reward I can give you, my friend; and that is happiness."

Callinicus looked after him with a frown, wondering at his strange words

But now— Everything was changed, after this talk with the Emperor.

On the night before the fleet sailed, the woman came for him with the ring of carved agate. Midnight sounded as they came into the palace by a private way, and the guard there, knowing Callinicus, saluted his ring and passed them.

He found Eunice alone, in the little chamber overlooking the sea where she



always received him. Joyously, triumphantly, he clasped her in his arms.

"News, and news of the best, dear heart!" he exclaimed. "Now all your laws and regulations are fallen, all bars set aside. The Emperor has promised—Why, what's the matter? I tell you everything's all right!"

"The Emperor!" she murmured, and pressed her face against his breast, her

arms holding him convulsively. "I fear him; I have reason! He's a strange man, my dearest, a strange man—"

"Bah! He's a good fellow," and Callinicus broke into a laugh. "Listen; he's given his word about our marriage. He's promised me happiness, you understand? And he knew what I meant."

She held him off, her blue eyes wide in fear.

"You told him—you told him?" she whispered.

"Told him—what?" And Callinicus laughed again. "There's nothing I could tell him, my dear. Oh, I was frank enough with him! After all, I could only tell him that you were a lady of the palace. I've not tried to find out about you; I've kept my promises. Besides, I've been too infernally busy. You know that we sail at dawn?"

"I know," she said, and her arms folded tighter about him, and there was heartbreak in the moan of her words. "I know. Oh, God! If you were not going!"

Strangely enough, all his reassurances, all his tale of the Emperor's firm friendship, had no effect upon her. Even when, much later, the moon crept long silver fingers in at the open window, and touched her sleeping face on his arm, Callinicus saw the marks of tears on her cheeks.

Short was their parting, and not sweet, for fear and terror lay upon the Lady Eunice. Then at the last she took the carved agate ring from her finger and put it upon his; barely would it slip down upon his little finger.

"Wear this, wear this for me," she said with tears. "It belonged to the great emperor, Constantine, long ago. It is supposed to protect the wearer from all harm; wear it, my beloved, yet let no palace lord see it, or the Emperor. Above all, not the Emperor!"

"None shall see it," Callinicus reassured her, and they parted on a kiss.

DAWN found him aboard the great bulk of the *St. Peter*, which the Emperor commanded in person, and with the first sunlight, the long oars were dipping and sending them to the open sea. All fifty of the ships made ready with the new engines, loaded heavily with the glass balls, with stones for the ballistæ, with heavy-armed men who groaned and staggered sickly to the rail as the sea-dip took them and the sails went up. . . .

Three weeks later, the sea road of Cyzicus beheld a strange and terrible sight. The white city lifted in glory from the waves, the amphitheater with its intersecting river crowded with the populace, the glorious temple of Hadrian, ranked among the seven wonders of the world by many critics, lifting its enormous pillars in majesty. To right and left, in the harbor, lay at rest the fleet of the empire.

And in between them, heading cautiously from the open sea, came the armada of the Caliph, with the great leader Khalid flying his green banner from the largest hulk of all. The oars flashed and dripped gold in the sunlight, and standing on the high deck of the *St. Peter*, the Emperor touched Callinicus on the shoulder.

"Ha, my friend! Now comes battle. But one thing you have never told me—your secret. Now, suppose some Arab archer brings you down today?"

"Then all is well, Lord!" Callinicus turned, laughter flooding across his handsome features, excitement kindling in his gray eyes. "The Patriarch at Constantinople holds a letter addressed to you, in case I die. In that letter is the secret—to be held by you, by the emperors who follow you, and by none other."

THE arm of the Emperor swept about his broad shoulders and held him tight in a swift embrace. The bearded features, for all their rugged vigor, were sad.

"Ah, my friend! You remember my words, when first we met, about women ruling the lives of all men? Well, you understand those words better now, I think. Tell me, is this lady of the palace whom you love—is she your greatest desire?"

"She is everything," said Callinicus simply. He touched the ring upon his finger, the ring whose agate bezel was turned inward. "If I die, Lord, send her this ring; it is known to the guards, at least, so that you'll have no trouble learning who she is. And if I live—remember your promise! She is everything, everything."

"Right," said the Emperor. "Happiness, my friend, is a gift from God. Seldom indeed can a mere emperor give it; but today I shall give it."

And he turned away, as though to hide his face.

No more time for talk. In upon those silent poised ships, in between their widely separated lines, advanced the Arab fleet, a hundred and more proud galleys, with the name of Allah pealing to heaven from thousands of throats, with the oars flashing to the din of cymbals and the reiterated thud of drums.

A catapult thrummed. A huge shaft leaped from their foremost ship and with a thudding smash drove broadside into the stem of the *St. Peter*. Then the beams of the ballistæ swung, and great stones flashed in the sunlight. But, from

the Emperor's ship, a single trumpet blew a long, keen note.

Here the wicked arms of smaller ballistæ began to jerk, from all the Greek ships, dozens of them. The Arab craft drove in closer, gathered speed, and men made ready with grapnels. Crowded along the bulwarks were the fierce brown faces of men who had swept over Arabia and Persia, across Syrian mountains, over Egyptian sands; louder and louder shrilled the name of Allah as the ships crowded in.

Then the glass balls swung by the ballistæ began to strike. Among the farther Arab craft they fell, and where they burst, flames swept up. Those craft closer in saw men suddenly spring to life aboard the Greek ships, men pouring up from the holds as a storm of arrows darkened the air. Along the Greek bulwarks, strange bronze engines pointed and swung.

The grapnels caught and held. But the yells to Allah died out in piercing shrieks, as spouts of living flame swept the bulwarks and the crowding boarders ready to leap, and hand-grenades burst on deck and among rowers. Then, only then, the Greek ships moved. Cables were cut, oars thrust out. The grapnel ropes were severed. Into the Arab craft poured men who slew, almost unopposed, and out upon the farther armada burst the Greek ships with their weapons of flame and their shouting thousands.

That day in fire and water the name of Allah died. Khalid and some few of his ships fled away, but the greater part remained there and smoked and hissed as they sank under the waves.

As the battle broke into flight, the Emperor crossed the deck to where a dark Sicilian archer stood at work. He caught the man's shoulder and spoke rapidly to him. The Sicilian paled.

"Lord—you cannot mean—"

"Obey!"

The Sicilian set a shaft to the string. He drew back the arrow; the bowstring twanged, and the shaft flew. Straight and true it flew. Callinicus died as it pierced through him, pinning him to the bulwark behind; through the heart it went.

When the *St. Peter* hauled about toward Cyzicus, the Emperor went up to where the body of Callinicus still swung,

there against the bulwark. He reached down and took a ring from the little finger of the dead hand, a ring whose agate bezel had been ever turned inward.

"I've kept a promise and lost a friend, Callinicus," he murmured sadly. "I've kept you from a sad awakening and a sadder ending; the glory and the happiness that is yours, remains yours. There was no other way; for I am Cæsar, and the things that are Cæsar's can belong to no other man. Yes; be happy, in that you never knew the truth."

Then, turning, he called a secretary and handed him the ring.

"On your life, see to it!" he commanded harshly. "With the news of victory to the capital, send this ring to the Empress Eunice. There'll be no other message; that will be sufficient."

NICEPHORUS the chronicler adds that from this day the resounding name of "wet fire" made the very sight of a Greek terrible to those accursed followers of Allah. . . .

When I had digested the story and its startling revelation, I sought my friend Martin Burnside and found him once more pouring over that fragment of bronze.

"What the devil was your wet fire, after all?" I demanded. "There's no explanation of it in these pages."

"Nor elsewhere," he said, chuckling. "The secret ingredient is supposed to have been quicklime. It remained a secret with the Byzantine emperors, and perished with them. . . . It'll never be known for certain."

"Still I don't see," was my comment, "what there is to connect your broken piece of bronze with the tale, or to prove that it's one of those siphons."

"Then look and perhaps you'll see," he said tartly. He pointed to a spot where he had scraped the bronze clean, and I saw Greek letters incised there. "A part of some inscription that's gone," Martin Burnside said. "There's only one word left intact. You can see for yourself that it proves what the thing was and who made it."

So, indeed, it did. For the one word was the name of *Callinicus*, the man who preserved the empire, and received the rarest and greatest reward that ever one man had from another—the happiness of ignorance.

HAWK of the

By WILLIAM L. CHESTER

The Story So Far:

NOBLE in purpose and aspect, the schooner *Cherokee* nosed her way through the shipping in San Francisco Harbor one autumn day. . . . She was last spoken by a whaler, standing north into the Bering Sea, where she was swallowed up in a dense fog—and never again seen by the eye of civilized man. . . .

The *Cherokee* was no ordinary vessel, for her owner and navigator, Doctor Lincoln Rand, had equipped her as a kind of floating infirmary in which he hoped to accomplish for the natives of the north Pacific coasts something of what another knight of medicine has done in Labrador on the Atlantic side. With him were his young wife Helena, and his educated Indian aid and friend Mokuyi.

A succession of storms drove the ship off her course, and dismasted her. And for days thereafter she drifted blindly through fog, apparently northward. It grew increasingly cold. For many days the three floated thus, blindly, in their groaning, creaking craft.

Yet the long-expected complete freeze-up did not materialize. The *Cherokee* actually began shaking off her weight of ice, and floated freely once more. Then

one day they saw a branch drift past, with leaves still green upon it. Finally they came in sight of shoals; and dimly through the hanging mists, they detected a distant headland.

By what benevolence of the Almighty they never knew, the ship passed somehow through the roaring invisible maelstrom of the combers. When they finally and unmistakably grounded, all three believed the end had come. But early dawn of a day which would last but an hour or two revealed instead that most beautiful sight of all to sea-weary eyes—land!

A strange and savage land it proved—an oasis of the Arctic somewhere north of Siberia, they concluded, somehow warmed by unknown ocean currents and by the fires of a great volcanic region that flamed beyond the horizon. A land thickly wooded with evergreens, for the most part, and supporting many and varied wild animals. Stranger still was its human population.

For almost immediately upon landing, Rand and Helena and Mokuyi were beset by a band of painted savages, and would have been killed had not Mokuyi addressed them in his native tongue. *And they understood him!*

In the long talk which followed, Rand learned that these people were unquestionably of the same stock as the American Indian, though they had never so much as heard of the outside world. And Rand found much evidence for his growing conviction that here was the birthplace of the Indian race, whence our First Americans came in prehistoric times.

A few months the newcomers lived among these primitive people; and here Helena's baby was born.

But only six weeks afterward tragedy wrote an end. Native enemies from the plains to the north raided the village; and both Rand and Helena were killed before the attack was beaten off. Thereupon Mokuyi adopted the little white



WILDERNESS

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon

THE fascinating story of a white boy born and brought up in a strange wild new-found land whence came, perhaps, the American Indian.



boy as his own; Mokuyi's native wife Awena cared for him; and later Mokuyi himself taught the boy to speak and to read the English of his fathers.

Kioga, he was named—the Snow Hawk. And the child throve amazingly in his early years. Yet the other children of the village were jealous of his superior powers, and finally when he was six, stoned him out of the village. But little Kioga had one stanch friend—Aki, a bear-cub Mokuyi had given him some time before, now half-grown and powerful. And somehow, with Aki and the good-natured bear-clan, Kioga managed to survive and to recover from his hurts. . . . When at length he returned to the village, he was received with open arms by Mokuyi, but there were many who scoffed at his wild tale.

In lone foray at night against a sleeping camp of plains savages, Kioga killed his first enemy, and brought back the long rope and whip which he added to his store of weapons. In trying to help his bear-friend Yanu in a fight to the death against a great tiger, he was himself wounded. In rescuing a puma cub, he acquired another savage pet, Mika. . . . These events starred his boyhood. And then, visiting the shore one day, he saw the hulk of a vessel pounding to pieces on the reef. Swimming out, Kioga boarded the wreck, and explored it. In the cabin he came upon a skeleton—and the ship's logbook. (*The story continues in detail:*)

KIOGA read from the log-book: *"The crew have taken all the food with them and abandoned ship. No sight of land yet. I have not the strength to leave my cabin today. Will God let me die on this forsaken vessel for having returned for my gold?"*

There was more, but the words were so indistinctly written as to be illegible. What was gold? Why had this poor dead thing returned for it at the risk of life? Why had the crew taken all the food and left none? Mokuyi would know—yes, Kioga would have to ask Mokuyi. But first—

A little bookcase had disgorged its contents upon the floor. Almost the first thing the boy's glistening eyes fell upon were the printed characters he had learned to know so well. Here were riches he could appreciate.

Some wide and catholic taste must have inspired such a collection of books. There were thin volumes of the classics—Shakespeare, Bacon, Thomas Browne; there were histories, biographies and books upon mathematics and astronomy and navigation, tomes filled with essays by Mill and Carlyle.

For a time the arrangement of the printing baffled Kioga; he would jump from page 3 to page 5, losing the intervening contents; but he quickly discovered his mistake and corrected it. Presently, realizing that he could not hope to read all these volumes in a single day, he bundled them into several heavy



packages, tied these together with strips of rawhide and transferred them all to a hiding-place ashore.

Returning, he discovered a sheaf of newspapers, most of them printed in English. The shortened forms of the headlines gave him some trouble at first, and the continuation of front-page news on later pages. Often entire pages were missing. And now the sound of rushing waters far out on the reefs told him he had not much time left to explore the cabin. Rummaging further, he found that the drawers of a desk opened, and spent several minutes delightedly pulling them in and out. At last one fell upon his bare foot, and he desisted, turning to examine the skeleton again.

About its waist he discovered a moldy belt, filled, investigation proved, with gold coins, which he appropriated because the shining metal attracted his eye. In one corner lay a sheath-knife in a leather case. This he recognized at once as superior to his own flint knife, which he had lost somewhere, and took it too. Then, gathering up the newspapers, he went on deck to estimate how much time remained to him in which to continue his explorations.

The tide was at full ebb. He had, then, perhaps a few hours at the outside, since the waters, when once they began to return, would rush in like a tidal wave. Familiarity had eased his apprehensions by now. Quickly he dropped below again to look into a room which he had passed several times indifferently, but which, on his last passing it, had exhaled certain stale but extremely enticing odors.

It was the ship's galley, filled with clattery things among which his inquisi-

itive fingers began a quick play. In one dark corner he uncovered and drew forth a flat stick, beautifully ornamented, in his opinion, with a coil of wire. This he turned over and over in his hand, curiously.

Suddenly he struck the right combination. There was a sharp snap, and a lusty screech from Kioga as with hair on end he cleared a table in one startled bound and brought up amid a heap of crashing pots and pans knocked over in his surprise. Then, like a monkey that has seized a charged wire and cannot let go, he tried to shake it off, and banged it on the floors and walls—to no avail.

Surprise had momentarily scared the wits out of him, but he was soon the little stoic again, enduring the pain until by spreading wood and metal, he got his hand free of the trap. For a while he eyed it distrustfully. Twice he reached for it and withdrew his hand, nervously touching it again.

At last he picked it up gingerly, and since it snapped no more, reasoned that the danger must all be in the adjustment of the spring. He soon fathomed the secret of the bait-trigger, and conquered his last fear by setting it several times and then springing it by pressing the trigger with a broken arrow-shaft.

THEN he set it aside, turning his attention to other items of interest in the kitchen.

About the walls were shelves lined with bottles, rusty cans and curious flagons filled with various culinary accessories. Into the nearest box Hawk's fingers dipped inquisitively. When dry snow from within it adhered to them, he licked them off instinctively and—*hai!*—it was sweet. A neighboring box contained more white granules of which he took a great handful and poured it into his mouth, anticipating a great treat. To his startled dismay the stuff seared his tongue. To all appearances identical, one box contained sugar, the other salt.

For a long time this wonder held him enthralled, as squatting upon the broad stove before the shelf he tasted first a pinch of one, then a pinch of the other. Now his roving eye fell on a box marked "*Cinnamon*." This too he must sample, and found it quite tasty, but carelessly dropped the box, which disappeared through a hole in the broken flooring and vanished in the depths below.

Never mind, he would taste this other brownish-red stuff in the unmarked box.

He took a generous helping, but the moment his lips had closed on it he knew something was terribly wrong. Frantically he emptied his mouth of what was in fact red pepper, stale but potent still, and seizing the nearest fluid-filled flagon to hand, took a long swig, intending to wash away the burning stuff from his mouth. A moment later, sneezing and wry of face, he was fleeing down the passageway toward the deck with streaming eyes and undignified haste. Behind him, smashed to bits on the floor of the galley, lay the fragments of a bottle whose torn label bore the single word "*Vinegar*."

ONE more trial awaited the bewildered lad. As he rounded a bend in a corridor, he saw a wild-eyed figure, brandishing a long knife, bearing swiftly down upon him. For a brief instant both hesitated—Hawk, because for the first time those super-keen senses of his had not apprised him of an enemy's presence. Then, concluding that the other's silence and stealth augured no good intentions, he acted according to his training. Voicing his war-whoop, which rang strangely in that ancient hulk—he leaped forward, intent upon getting in the first blow.

Back went the long knife and down it fell—but not upon the breast of an enemy. There was a brittle crash as Hawk brought up with stunning force against something hard. A few seconds later he was picking himself up from a little pile of broken glass. He was cut and bruised, but more scared than hurt. He had run full tilt into a tall mirror—something entirely new in his experience.

Of course water was a reflector, but water lay flat, and the mirror had stood upright. For some moments Kioga sat grimacing at himself in a piece of the glass which had not fallen. Then he began to admire his own appearance, the fine loin-cloth, the glossy black braid. He danced a measure of an Indian war-dance to get the effect, which pleased him beyond words.

What wonderful people were those who created objects filled with such magic properties!

Suddenly he stiffened, listening. The distant roar of the incoming tides reached his ears. Hastily he put a piece of the mirror down in his quiver, as a souvenir and good-luck fetish, left an offering of a pretty feather before the remaining glass, and darted out on deck.

Then, confused and subdued by his hectic adventures in galley and corridor,

he clutched his newspapers, slid down the side of the wreck, released his grapnel, coiled his rope and dashed for the shore in water already up to his knees. He had not been a minute too soon, for with the tide the sharks also came.

Now he took time to examine his fine new long knife. Then he looked at the money-belt. Curious and pretty yellow disks, were these valuable coins; a man had paid with his life for having returned to save them. Awhile Snow Hawk examined the effigies on their face and back. Then, experimentally, he scaled one out across the water, watching the yellow glint as the rays of the setting sun fell on the skipping, leaping coin; then, retaining but a few, he spent ten minutes scattering the others after the first. Everything civilized men did, he thought, was done with an eye to perfection, even to these things which skipped across the waves better than the best of flat shells.

But Guna and the wolves would soon be abroad. He would return to his ship tomorrow. When last he saw her, the tidal waters had already lifted her bow.

But alas, on the morrow the wreck had been carried out and probably battered to bits on the far reefs. Save for his burning tongue and the objects he had salvaged, Kioga had nothing to show for that hair-raising adventure on the hulk, yet he would never forget it. It had been the most wonderful experience of all his life.

CHAPTER XII

TREACHERY AND REBELLION

BEFORE his lodge-fire in the village of Hopeka, Mokuyi the Wolf sat cross-legged upon a mat, writing in the old logbook of the *Cherokee*. It was a strange occupation for one bearing every mark of aboriginal barbarism about his apparel, weapons and surroundings; but what Mokuyi had begun as a whim he now continued as a habit. Upon the exhaustion of Rand's writing-materials, his own ingenuity had furnished him with an eagle-quill pen, and ink made from the diluted juices of wild berries.

He wrote now of matters pertinent to Sawamic's Indian kingdom, and of events which filled his mind at the moment.

Mokuyi's own rapid rise in the councils of the Shoni had not blinded him to the knowledge that a powerful but concealed element had continually opposed his growing influence in tribal affairs.

He had long sensed Yellow Weasel's hostility; but unaware of the witch-doctor's leadership of the secret Long-Knife Society, he did not realize the subtle savage's real strength, and accordingly did not attribute this opposition to him.

FOR twelve years Mokuyi had sought the opportunity to avenge the deaths of his white friends, yet never had he learned for certain who led that fatal raid of years ago, nor whose hand had struck the cruel blow which robbed his adopted son of his white mother. Thus, though he believed Yellow Weasel was capable of treachery and hatred toward himself, and strongly suspected the shaman of complicity in those old crimes, he never dreamed that the Indian contemplated treason to his chief Sawamic.

One night, however, Mokuyi accidentally surprised a clandestine meeting of several members of the Long-Knife Society. His unexpected presence immediately reduced them to an embarrassed, guilty silence, but not before he had overheard just enough to send a hundred alarming thoughts through his head, and to assure him of their enmity toward the present Indian government.

The incompleteness of his information restrained him from denouncing the plotters to Sawamic at once; and since he believed the traitors to be unaware that he had fathomed their intentions, he determined to obtain further evidence before revealing what he already knew, thinking thus the more completely to wreck their designs.

He kept his silence at the risk of his life; for one day, while hunting alone in the forest near the village, a hard-driven arrow, intended for his heart, transfixed only the thick muscle beneath his left arm.

Scarce had he dropped to his face behind a fallen tree when a second shaft vibrated in the tree against which he had stood. From its angle of entry he determined the direction whence the missile had flown. But though he crawled the length of the log, thinking to surprise his ambusher, he saw no one. Nor could he identify the arrows, which were new and bore no marks of ownership.

Carefully and warily Mokuyi made his way back to his canoe and thence to the village. He determined to make known his suspicions to a meeting of the Council of Sachems, which was to be held the following night, lest a second attempt on his life be more successful.

These events transpired at about the time when Snow Hawk discovered the loss of his ship, and much disappointed, turned his nose inland, determined always to come here after storms and seek hulks aboard which he might find other interesting objects from another world.

The boy was hurrying home to acquaint Mokuyi with his discoveries. That civilization of which his Indian father so often spoke had now changed in his mind from a hazy and nebulous conception into a vital sharp picture, suggestive of a thousand questions he was eager to put to Mokuyi. . . . Poor little dispossessed citizen of a distant race, what a pitiless disappointment now awaited him!

He came at last to the village, scaled the tall wall and entered, slipping quietly from the shadow of one lodge to another, careful to wake no one, nor to disturb the sentries who guarded the village by night.

Softly he attained his own lodge, moved a secret section of bark and slid in unannounced, as he always did. All was quiet inside. The figure of Mokuyi lay next the dying fire's embers upon a sleeping-mat. The form of Awena, as usual, reclined upon the bunk at one side of the lodge.

KIOGA waited, listening, to determine whether his return had been heard by anyone. As he stood keenly alert, he detected an ominous strangeness which baffled him momentarily. With sickening suddenness he knew what was wrong—he missed the steady regular breathing of the two sleepers.

Darting to Mokuyi's side, he bent over him, dared to touch that quiet hand—and found it cold. He stirred the fire's embers to get light by which to see Mokuyi's face. The Indian's eyes were half open, but vacant and dull. The lips were parted, but not in a smile.

Life was gone. Mokuyi—good father, loyal friend, too long the bearer of the Long-Knives' deadly secret—was dead.

With stiffening lips and creeping flesh the boy fled to Awena's side, softly calling her name in broken tones. There was no response. With trembling fingers he removed the soft pelt which covered the quiet figure, looked once upon the ghastly tortured features of her he had loved, and then recoiled in horror. The handle of a knife protruded from the still breast—and that knife was his own!

Afraid, terrified, pale and quivering,



As they fell through space, Kioga plunged the blade—twice for Awenn, twice for Mokuyi.

he crouched there alone in the presence of violent death, which so cruelly incriminated him. Twice he stretched forth his hand to remove the killing flint, then revolted from the grisly task. Then with his eyes drawn back in terrible fascination to the features of Mokuyi, he started away, and in another moment was fleeing stealthily the length of the long-house.

By the time he reached the entrance, action had restored him to some extent, and he returned part way to peer into the various family sections, seeking some sign of him who had done this thing. No one was awake when again his fingers fell upon the skin that covered the lodge entrance.

He paused another second to listen, with lowered head. Then, suddenly, his dark thatch snapped sharply erect. From the door-flap under his hand came the faintest of scents, which only a nose like his could have detected, unpleasantly reminiscent of one he knew and hated: Yellow Weasel the witch-doctor, his mortal enemy, had come in the dead of night, and on soft feet had departed.

Hawk had shed no tear as yet; it was not the time. Nor was there fear in his eyes as he retraced his steps. With infinite tenderness he gathered up into his strong young arms all that was mortal of Awena and bore her out into the stillness of the forest. Returning, he did as much for that other body, possessed in this extremity of an almost superhuman nervous strength.

When an hour later he returned to Hopeka, it was to seek out and slay the worker of this terrible crime.

CREEPING to Yellow Weasel's hand-some lodge, and hiding in its shadow, he drew the long knife he had found aboard the ship, consumed by the lust to avenge, but rendered cautious by the presence of two guards near the entrance to the big lodge.

Of a sudden he paused alertly. From within came the sound of low voices. As he had often done before, he swung lightly to the apex of the structure from a convenient tree-limb and peered in.

The interior was crowded with Indian members of the Long-Knife Society whom Yellow Weasel was addressing in an almost inaudible voice.

"Twelve snows ago we, the Long-Knives, destroyed the accursed white medicine-man. With this hand I slew his long-haired woman in the long ago.

Both were workers of great evil magic. Today it came time again to kill. You, my brothers, passed sentence upon two among our own race who knew our plans. Again my hand executed sentence. Both have died, and the child which brought the evil-eye to our midst will be stoned for their deaths. I have so contrived it.

"As with Mokuyi and his woman, so with all others who oppose us!" Yellow Weasel glared about him with the eyes of a tiger at the conclusion of this speech, his tattooed features a grimace of hatred upon which the scars of self-torture showed livid and terrible.

A LOW chorus of approving grunts rose to the listening ears above. With a memory trained to the observation of detail, the young Snow Hawk catalogued every face in his mind, as again he listened to Yellow Weasel.

"So—tomorrow," hissed the medicine-man, "in the confusion that follows the finding of the bodies, the boy will be hunted through forest. While men are on his trail, Sawamic will be alone in his lodge. Then—" The shaman made an eloquent stabbing gesture with his right hand. Again approval rumbled forth, and savage eyes glittered as the ring-leader of the Indian rebellion pre-acted the cowardly deed.

Stimulated to something like a frenzy by the consciousness of his own power, Yellow Weasel turned his gaze upward as if to invoke the power of the fates. As luck would have it, he looked straight through the smoke-hole down which Hawk's eyes could dimly be seen peering, and into the shadowy face of his worst and youngest enemy.

For one instant the witch-doctor stood petrified, his mouth dropping open, his eyes staring. Slowly all eyes followed his own, and saw what he saw—two flaming spots of green in a face as dark as any of their own. Then the spots winked out, there was a faint rustle and finally silence.

When an instant later the plotters darted out to seize the listener, the Snow Hawk had vanished into thin air.

It would have been fatal to all their plans to pursue him and so cause a hue and cry which must inevitably lead to an inquiry into activities which assembled so many fighting-men at the medicine-man's lodge, unknown to their chieftain.

It was, therefore, an uneasy and silent band which separated and went their various ways. But of them all not one

but would have unhesitatingly buried his tomahawk in Hawk's brain—not one but vowed he would yet do so. Well they knew that though they had done away with one menace to their safety and slain a helpless witness to the first crime, their perilous secret had but changed its place of repository from the brain of Mokuyi to that of his son, from which only death could expunge it. . . .

Already well into the blackness of the forest, Kioga was careless as he had never been before, his mind filled with an agony of doubt, sorrow and revenge by the disclosure of treachery he had just heard. He knew nothing of the bloody primitive intrigue involved in these deeds of violence. He was not yet old enough to realize that he held the lives of every man in Yellow Weasel's lodge in the hollow of his hard little hand, or that a word from him would have betrayed them all to swift execution. He thought only of a personal revenge, to be visited individually upon each and every one he had seen in Yellow Weasel's company that night.

A band of wolves caught his scent and swerved as a hungry tiger also converged upon his warm trail. But both marauding elements backed off, threatening one another, as if deciding that some prey larger than an Indian boy should be the bone of contention over which they fought so dangerous an antagonist. For the time, at least, the Snow Hawk went in safety, as do those upon whom the wilderness spirits have set their protecting seal, or for whom they have decreed greater deeds.

In the later gloom of this tragic night a tall pillar of fire rose into the sky from a mountain-side across the valley. When it died down, a dark figure approached the funeral pyre and stirred the ashes of the dead with the sharp points of his various weapons. Thus Hawk consecrated them to a revenge adequate to the four-fold grievance which he now held against Yellow Weasel and the Long-Knife Society. Then he cut his long hair in token of mourning, and sobbing brokenly, melted into the wilderness.

CHAPTER XIII

OUTLAWED

IF the powers of the wilderness allowed the bereaved Kioga to pass in safety, other malignant forces conspired to encompass his destruction.

Confounded and awed by the disappearance of the grim evidence of murder which he had hoped to use as *prima-facie* evidence by which to convict Kioga of his own crime, Yellow Weasel, though disconcerted momentarily, quickly recovered his wits. Coincident to the boy's recent absence there had occurred a series of paralyzing raids by the plains Indians upon several Shoni villages to the north. Quick to see in this situation an opportunity of involving Kioga, the witch-doctor made the most of it in an address to the council.

"The son of Mokuyi is in league with our enemies. While he was away, Wa-Kanek came to raid our villages. There is blood upon the hearthstone of Mokuyi, our beloved councilor," continued the hypocritical medicine-man. "Where are these who loved the Snow Hawk?" The malevolent certainty with which Yellow Weasel answered his own question convinced more than one of his listeners that the boy was better slain at sight than allowed to menace the Shoni. "They are dead, O Councilors, and their spirits will roam abroad to haunt us until we sprinkle the blood of Kioga upon their fireplace and fasten his scalp upon their doopost. Only thus can we appease their anger."

KNOWING Snow Hawk's superlative skill in woodcraft, and foreseeing in him a mighty warrior at no distant date, wiser heads among the war-chiefs had demurred at pronouncing his death-sentence. But Yellow Weasel's words had at least the weight of plausibility; and his fanatic eloquence in arguing the case against the absent boy fanned the smoldering embers of suspicion into a flame of superstitious certainty.

As a result, twenty armed warriors, all of them selected by the crafty Yellow Weasel from among his own henchmen, set out on the trail which Kioga had made no effort to conceal. At their head slunk the witch-doctor himself, laden with the hideous charms and fetiches of his pagan mummery. Not content with having betrayed his enemy to his death, like a jackal he must also be in at the kill.

It was not long before they came upon the Snow Hawk, walking slowly and with heavy heart. With a signal to his followers, Yellow Weasel moved upon him as they gradually closed in upon the boy from all sides.

Where were those keen ears when a



What was this uncouth, forbidding beast? From what dark retreat had it emerged? Kioga had but one answer: It must be Gu-ne-ba—the Giant Death!

twig snapped under Yellow Weasel's foot despite his care? Where was the piercing power of those lynx eyes that they did not on glancing to one side see the skulking shadows of several naked warriors on murder bent? Where the sixth sense, the intuition that had warned him of peril a thousand times before this? They slept under the narcosis of overwhelming sorrow—and not ten yards behind him now came the shaman, tomahawk tightly gripped in one hand, a cold implacability in his glittering eyes.

But in the protecting armory of Hawk's senses there was one which never rested. The merest eddy of a breeze brought to that highly evolved nose the message unperceived by his other faculties. That Yellow Weasel followed close behind, he knew in an instant: and that no good could come of that surveillance he was certain. Awake at last to his peril, he saw others of the band, but gave no sign.

He cut gradually to one side, so that his trail might bring him above a ravine through which flowed a muddy racing stream whose every sinuosity and varying depth he knew with the intimacy of many swims and plunges there.

Gone were all thoughts of sorrow as the first instinct of survival came into play. Deliberately, as if debating which trail to pursue, he paused, nothing in his attitude revealing his alert wariness.

Ever nearer crept Yellow Weasel in a stalk of which a panther might have been proud. But the now awakened microphonic ears of the Snow Hawk heard sounds beyond the register of ordinary ears. Without turning his head, he sensed when his enemy gathered his muscles. In the instant that the witch-doctor sprang with upraised tomahawk, Kioga whirled, side-stepped with the quickness of thought, and seized the falling tomahawk arm of his assailant. His other hand shot to the shaman's corded throat, fastening there with the tenacious gripe of a boa's fangs. The blow which would have cleft his skull to the ears but scratched him.

Then for the second time a human being, more devil than human, tasted of the deadly force within those young muscles as the Snow Hawk grappled his would-be assassin to the ravine's edge.

A moment they hung there tightlocked, vengeance versus malignity, the grisly medicine-man in frightful contrast



to the fine-featured, clean-skinned youth, strained body to body in the fevered embrace of mortal combat.

The Snow Hawk fought with cunning holds, muscle-racking devices and leverages strange to the witch-doctor. The strength upon which Yellow Weasel had counted availed but little against this slippery fury, twining about him like a constricting anaconda which crushes while strangling. Upon his tomahawk arm Kioga worked some agonizing twist of Oriental torture. As the ax fell from his numbed fingers, Yellow Weasel writhed and struck with his free hand, clawing beastlike with his nails, gouging for the eye, but ever more blindly as those clenching fingers sealed out his air-supply. Aware of the imminence of retribution, the whole frame of the witch-doctor shuddered. Then suddenly he was within a hair's-breadth of escaping as for a moment Kioga relaxed his throat-hold, and the shaman released in one fearful high-pitched yell the terror which had been struggling for utterance.

But Kioga had loosened one grip only to jerk Yellow Weasel's belt-knife from its sheath. He had no consciousness of their long drop toward the water, nor of the

wiry fingers choking at his own neck, no thought of aught but to empty the shaman's treacherous heart of the venom which it forced through his veins in lieu of blood. As they fell through space with flailing limbs, he sent the blade plunging into the bony breast, twice for Awena, twice for Mokuyi; then stabbing and stabbing again on his own account ere the convulsive fingers of the shaman released him and fell away under the water.

Then Kioga sought the surface to breathe air clean at last of the taint of his parents' murderer—and instantly plunged anew to avoid being seen by Yellow Weasel's cohorts.

THE rushing waters had scarce closed over his head again when the other Long-Knives, too late to prevent his *coup*, rushed to a point in the stream where it shallowed and widened. Here with straining bows and ready arrows trained upon the water, they waited for the struggling combatants to reappear.

But it was an hour before a tall savage stumbled over something, and reaching into the depths drew up the body of Yellow Weasel. Lax in death, his own

knife buried in his breast, he had paid the penalty for all earthly crimes. Of Kioga there was not the least trace. He too must be dead, drowned in the yellow waters of the rushing stream.

To make assurance doubly sure, for hours the braves probed the waters and searched the shallows for his body, to no avail, discussing the affair meanwhile without attempting secrecy. And beneath a water-mined bank thickly hung with lush grasses, a pair of blazing eyes watched their every move, and keen ears heard their every word.

When in their progress the searchers neared this spot an invisible form shot out beneath the muddied surface and was swiftly caught downstream in the current. One warrior's glance focused momentarily on a swirl that appeared at the surface, but when nothing of the underwater swimmer appeared, concluded that it had been no more than an otter or a mink.

But a fox, digging for mice among the roots of a tree that overhung the stream leaped in sudden alarm, as a grapnel-like object hurtled upward and caught over a limb high above, carrying with it a length of wet but still serviceable rope. Fear turned to astonishment when a moment later a nimble brown-skinned human figure went rapidly up the rope to disappear in the foliage below.

Perhaps the fox recognized a fellow-outlaw in the vanished figure, for after a moment of watching he continued his digging; while Snow Hawk, once merely an outcast but now a refugee with a price on his head, was gone, leaving no trace by which his enemies might track him. He had also this advantage: he knew the intentions of his enemies toward himself, while they believed him dead along with Yellow Weasel.

That night, recalling the plot to assassinate Sawanic, he doubled back to the village. From a vantage-point outside the palisade he maintained steady watch on the chieftain's lodge. And when a stealthy shadow emerged from the darkness and raised the skin before the door, Hawk loosed a war-arrow through the marauder's heart, and he fell without a sound, lying still.

NEXT morning when the sachem saw a human body, a knife gripped in its dead hand, arrowed upon his very doorstep, it put him on guard. Never was he to know to whom he owed gratitude for the assassination's failure; but his roused

suspicions had the effect of putting an end, temporarily, to the treasonous activities of the now thoroughly alarmed Long-Knife Society.

Two days later the young outlaw learned beyond all further doubt what fate awaited should he ever fall into the power of his enemies.

IT so happened that Two-Scalp, brother of Yellow Weasel, was not entirely satisfied with the general belief as to Hawk's death. Alone, he set forth to verify certain suspicions he held regarding the reported killing of his brother, and the drowning of Snow Hawk.

Careful examination of the ground evidenced no sign of error on the part of the other Indians, however; and Two-Scalp had turned back toward his hidden canoe, intending to return to Hopeka, when the telltale clack of antler on branch evidenced to this skilled woodsman the approach of a deer forced by hard running out of its ordinary stealthy silence. In an instant he had an arrow at the cord.

On a ridge across from his own there was a quick commotion caused by a buck which took to the air in a soaring bound, only to be pierced in mid-leap by a flashing arrow, shot from a point beyond the view of Two-Scalp.

Then in another moment, unsuspecting, Kioga came out after his kill, and all Two-Scalp's suspicions were confirmed. With a hiss of vengeful satisfaction, he loosed the waiting shaft across the narrow ravine at almost point-blank range.

With the twang of Two-Scalp's bow, Snow Hawk leaped back, but not quickly enough to evade the arrow whistling over the gorge, which pierced and crippled his left arm—the bow-arm. He could hear the savage, forgetful of all caution in his excitement, rushing down through the thickets in the trough of the gully, and up the trail by which alone he could reach Kioga's exposed position.

For one short minute he was beyond view. With difficulty Snow Hawk managed to get his grapnel fast to a crevice on his own side of the ravine. Then like a pendulum he swung free. Halfway through the flight the grapnel gave sickeningly, and in catching hold again all but snapped him from the rope. But as the exultant Two-Scalp, with scalping-knife drawn, came charging out upon the ledge where last Snow Hawk had been seen, the boy seized and threw himself

flat upon a ledge nearly a hundred feet away.

Here, almost at eye-level with the astounded Two-Scalp, he saw the Indian's glance darting rapidly about, seeking to fathom the mystery of his disappearance, and scanning the cliff below and to either side. Nothing without wings could have attained the nearest hand-hold—and like an anxious ferret he went back and returned baffled, to search anew. But no trace of Hawk was discoverable, nor—remarkable fact—was there any sign of blood, though Two-Scalp knew that a miss at such range was out of the question.

It was this which gave rein to his savage imagination. He had often heard of Hawk's suspected "medicine" powers; and to his mind, bewildered by the inexplicable, that explained all. Either his arrow had been bewitched, or he had seen the ghost of the Snow Hawk; and now he fancied menace behind every tree, and crouching under every thicket. Alone and unnerved, his desire for vengeance gave way to his fears of the supernatural. Finally, overcome by them, he threw vengeance to the winds and hastened to his canoe.

Once well away from the point of danger, much of his courage returned. He realized belatedly that ghosts have never been known to leave visible signs of their comings and goings; and though he would not have dared to go back alone, in an hour he was in the village, assembling a party to be led upon the outlaw's trail.

Thus, out of a carelessness that sprang from fancied immunity, Snow Hawk lost all his gains and received an ugly though not serious wound. When Two-Scalp had gone, he broke the arrow and removed its ends from his arm, then took time to descend and cleanse it thoroughly at a spring.

MEANWHILE thirty expert marksmen quartered every inch of terrain near where Hawk had last been seen. They were no more successful than Two-Scalp had been, until one of them, bent to drink at a spring, uttered an exclamation, and held forth his cupped hand carefully.

"Blood!" he whispered fiercely. "Somewhere along the brook he has bathed the wound Two-Scalp inflicted on him. If we follow upstream quietly, we shall kill him easily."

But he reckoned without the nose of the outlaw, who, on divining the course

of events when their scent struck him, took to the cliffs again, and aided by his rope, left but one foot-print in the mud of the bank—which the Indians presently came upon.

THE Long-Knives held a conference under the cliff where he was hiding. That he could have mounted so sheer a slope was so improbable that they did not even consider it; having no idea of the uses to which he put his rope, concluded that he had waded upstream, thinking by this ancient trick to confuse them.

Accordingly they hastened off in that direction as Hawk had hoped they would do; and this gave him time to reflect upon his situation. He found it far from pleasant:

Bereft of the wise council of Mokuyi and the defending voice of Awena, he had not a friend in the world excepting only the wild beasts with whom he had spent so much of his boyhood. Mika was here, but the yellow-eyed panther could give him no counsel; nor could the bears, of whom he had seen nothing for several weeks. Doubtless the latter were deep in the distant jungle-like forest, or at some periodical ursine concourse, or wallowing in the sulphur-springs far up the mountain-sides.

His own cunning and shrewdness in escaping the Indian trackers had but whetted their desire to capture and put an end to him. By the reasoning of savage men, his scalp at any one of their belts would miraculously endow his conqueror with all the skill which he, in life, had possessed. The members of the Long-Knife society, moreover, had a double reason for desiring his extermination.

It was to be war to the knife. Another might have fled the territory rather than face the hopeless odds confronting this lone boy with every man's hand against him. Not Kioga! He claimed these wilds as his own—swamp, forest and mountain. If die he must, he would perish here. So now, he patrolled countless places of retreat, defense or undisturbed rest, memorizing every place of concealment, of possible ambush, ever plotting in advance how he could put them to use. Like a general with a kingdom at stake, each vista unfolding before him became a problem in defense tactics.

In order that not even the hum of a bowstring should betray him to an enemy, he bound strips of weasel-fur about

each end of the string, near the horn, to absorb the twang. This was no ordinary weapon, but the product of a hundred trials and rejections, a deadly hunting-bow, capable of driving an arrow through an elk at anything under two hundred yards; while to lesser beasts its arrows were dangerous at any distance within the limits of their flight.

Born of a creative race, Snow Hawk possessed one instinct inherited from generations of trained hand-craftsmen and tool-users. I refer to his skill at whittling, carving, and that gift for inventive experiment which had provided him with the climbing rope. Now his creative impulse found another outlet:

He had immediately recognized pieces of iron and steel, salvaged from the occasional wreckage washed ashore, as of the same precious metal as his knife. These he unfailingly broke off and carried inland, to be heated and hammered into spear- and arrow-heads, rude curved swords and heavy war-axes such as he saw illustrated or read about in his books, or patterned after the designs of Indian weapons.

CHAPTER XIV

HUNTERS ON THE HEIGHTS

LIKE any other hunted creature, the Snow Hawk sought and found a suitable hide-away which he could use during the long black winter moons. It was a deep cavern, ideally situated midway between the base and summit of a sheer cliff rising some hundreds of feet up the side of a forested cañon. Inaccessible except by a narrow and all but impassable trail, it had two other virtues—a running spring trickling from some subterranean fissure, and a way of entrance via the almost solid wall of dense evergreens which screened it at all seasons. This was to be his lair, his wilderness sanctuary from weather, beast and man—but chiefly from the last, for of them all, his own kind were to prove his direst enemies.

Into this rude but satisfactory domicile, he transported a supply of hard-wood, and constructed a stone fireplace to receive it. Hither he brought his few possessions, among them his precious books and newspapers, the *Cherokee's* log-book, and certain other objects contained in Mokuyi's personal chest. The latter had been rescued only at the cost of a stealthy foray into the village of

Hopeka in the dead of night. During this visit he had also seized the opportunity of rifling the medicine-lodge once belonging to Yellow Weasel. Emerging with several objects rolled into a compact bundle, he melted, unobserved, back into the forest.

As was to be expected, he sought out the bear-cubs, trailing them from the salmon spawning-beds in the upper creek country to the glacier-lines far up the mountain-side, where insects, killed by the colder winds, collected in frozen clots to be garnered by the omnivorous beasts.

He visited a hundred inaccessible mountain-top refuges, passed the fumaroles of Old-Man-Smoking-Mountain and the sweltering neighborhood of the acrid sulphur-baths, meeting with many bears, but not those of his own band. He found them at last near the calm end of a little mountain lake, feeding on the dead grasshoppers blown ashore by the mild breeze.

Thus he took up his wild ways anew, ways from which for several years there was to be no turning back. Though outlawed and pursued by his own kind, he would have little time for bitterness. The myriad excitements of his life would demand the attention of every trained faculty.

The cubs, now great thick-muscled, heavy-coated brutes with long gleaming canines, and power enough in either fore-paw to stun a buffalo, followed the lithe and supple youth like tame dogs. Commonly they were happy-go-lucky adventurers, possessed of vigorous enterprise and great sagacity. Idling was not to their taste. Ingenuity, curiosity and enjoyment of recreation kept them on the go. Every grassy slope was an invitation to roll end over end to the bottom. They spied on the otters at their mud-slides, and occasionally joined in the game, to the consternation of the earlier players. They spent many hours watching beavers building huts and damming streams, and were in turn watched by other animals.

Influenced by Kioga's directing intelligence, a change was taking place among the bears. Hitherto they had had no need for the added security gained by union with others of their own kind. A mature bear was usually a law unto himself, the most powerful creature in his neighborhood. Except for family groups of mother and young, or younger cubs from the same litter, or the rare great concourses, theirs were but random meet-

ings—haphazard and unpredictable consociation as easily broken as formed, and having no permanent unity.

But thanks to Snow Hawk's hunting craft, his bears were better fed than most, for whereas he had once hunted only for his own sustenance, he now killed for the mouths of all. Thus the usual strife over the possession of meat was conspicuous by its absence among his bears—a factor which attracted others to the band. As a result, he was soon hard-pressed to pull down enough meat for them all.

Something must be done; so one day he led them from their remoter mountain haunts down into the rich wooded valleys where the buffalo-herds fed. There he concentrated upon a small group of the fierce wild cattle—whose guardian bulls presented a solid front as soon as they caught the scent of the intruding bruins.

As usual the bears circled, vainly seeking a weak spot in that horny wall, a defense they had never yet been able to carry by storm. But under Snow Hawk, it was to be different.

Perceiving that the bears had surrounded the herd, and that in at least one place the trees grew thick enough for his purpose, he climbed high, made his way among the branches to a spot almost over a great bull, and swung out above the huge red-eyed animal. Then, with all the fire and dash of a preying bird, he dropped heavily upon the beast's quarter.

Bellowing, the bull reared, but too late. With a body-weight lurch, Snow Hawk swung himself beneath the bearded jaw, wrenching at one horn. Down came that burly animal in a twisting fall that shook the ground, its own weight combining with the quick velocity of the man's initial strike to break the thick spine.

Taking swift advantage of the confusion incident to this unexpected attack from on high, the bears came in, crushing down the younger bulls with heavy smashing blows, their deep snarls mingling with the bellowing of the herd. In all over twenty animals fell, while but two bears showed more than a few horn-marks received in the mêlée.

SO Kioga taught them to hunt in unison, a dangerous business but efficient. Despite their intelligence, this would probably never have occurred to the bears, though daily they saw the wolves achieving their ends in the same way.



Himself the product of his wild life, Snow Hawk had now become also the master of his environment, adding strength upon strength to that with which nature had equipped him. He hunted as did the creatures about him, combining the best of their methods with others suggested by his own superior intelligence to attain a deadly surety of attack.

As self-appointed custodian of the cubs, he toughened back and thigh by rolling aside huge logs and slabs of rock to uncover for them the mice and insects beneath. Day-long journeys through the midway, along the upper canopy or below the river overhang, or amid the loftiest cliff pinnacles; unending wrestling with the heavier bears; countless encounters aground and aloft—all these had thew'd him as with steel and endowed him with a tireless endurance.

He had not the strength of a full-grown bear; but he could hold his own among them by adding to strength that eel-like agility which, far from diminishing with his growth, had increased away beyond what is usually considered the attainable limit of human tissues. The miracle of his leap carried him from one cliff-ledge to another a dozen feet above with the ease of a chamois, and his climbing skill and feats aloft might have startled a gibbon.

Heretofore his prowess had been chiefly in the arts of escape,—the darting run, the long high spring, the breath-taking climb into the lofty crags, or the swift drop toward the dark ravines,—all of which evidenced his wondrous coördina-

tion of nerve and sinew. But early maturity brought him a new force and drive that made him daily more nearly invincible.

None knew this better than the savage gangs of narrow-eyed wolves who lurked in the tamarack swamps or the black hemlock forests. Boldly now, Kioga entered their haunts to entice them forth on his trail by whipping them off their fresh kills, as once they had driven him from his.

Your marathon racer runs twenty-five miles and breasts the tape in a state of near-collapse. Kioga once lured the lower valley pack for twice that distance over a mountainous route, frequently letting the drooling leaders come within whip's-length before acquainting them with the stinging torture of that hissing thong. At the end of the run he took his position on a high rock, inducing them to attack by mouthing down on them an insulting mimicry of their own howls.

With dripping jaws clinking, and blood-infused eyes rolling in their own fire, the pack hesitated. Now and then one jumped and snapped, but in this old feud between Kioga and themselves the animals had learned prudence. They timed their leaps with noticeable care, for several mighty jaws were lost to the pack of late when that long glistening fang at Snow Hawk's thigh drank the heart's blood of one who leaped too high!

And now again a great gaunt male sprang up with flashing teeth. A hand with the grip of ice-tongs clamped upon the neck under his upraised mane just behind the ears. A flash of light darted to the bristling chest. The knife came away red; the wolf fell coughing, to be shredded and rended by his pitiless fangs on the instant.

NOT even the imperial might of the largest bears justified their attacking these killers when the wolves reinforced one another in numbers. But therein lay the world of difference between their human associate and his wild-animal allies. For while the bears ambled peacefully along unless attacked or infuriated, Snow Hawk and excitement were synonymous terms. Man-like, he must go out of his way to make things unpleasant for his foes. This the bears never completely understood, though they were always ready to hurry to the scene of action and join in the battles that ensued.

But not all of Snow Hawk's surplus energy was expended in hunting and

looking for excitement. One place in the wilderness drew him irresistibly and received his frequent visits. This was known among the Indian witch-doctors as the Unti-Gubi, or the Haunted Whirlpool, and was universally shunned as a very sink of peril. But not by Kioga.

At best, his ideas of a spirit-life after the body's death were hazy. He believed few of the superstitions inculcated in the native youths by the wily shamans. He distrusted the medicine-men, but did not fear their incantations. Accordingly, the place of their most dread predictions lured him oftenest. Never for a moment relaxing his grip upon the rope which bound him to shelf or rock, he had fathomed many of the secrets of the Haunted Whirlpool by cautious exploration. He had found channels unknown to the Indians where a craft might pass or hide in safety, and regularly paddled thence in his light canoe, racing through the flumelike cañon into the rapids, and riding their foaming crests into the mists that hung just above the Great Falls. Beyond that he never went; nor did he ever see another human being there—nor anything resembling a ghost.

THE great silver-gray puma often rode with him. Posed tense in the bow, with back-laid ears and eyes glowing like fireballs, Mika resembled some ancient worshiped animal-carving, rigid on its base at the portals of a pagan temple. Once or twice they were dimly glimpsed by the canoe-men of Hopeka when the river-mists were crimsoned by the weird reflected flare of the northerly volcanoes. But they were not molested.

In one other particular also, Kioga violated the Indian customs. Once having cut his lustrous black hair in token of mourning, he had never let it grow long again, for fear the trailing braid might one day catch in some high limb, leaving him dangling in torture. But like the savage Shoni warriors, at the first appearance of the soft young beard of manhood, he began to shave dry-faced, with a bit of sharp obsidian; for among the tribes of Nato-wa, as among the tribes of America long ago, the beard is an abomination.

Hawk's band of bears had by now grown to a considerable size by the addition of three more cubs by an old female, several rusty-black climbing bears, and others. Of these the greatest was Club-foot, a huge cinnamon whose morose and vicious nature grew more in-

tolerable daily, and threatened to destroy the armed neutrality of Kioga's wilderness society. Inevitably the two clashed.

HANGING, as was his occasional custom, from the end of his rope, half-way between branch and ground, Hawk was being amused by the antics of his wild fellows several yards below. With pride he watched the big cinnamon toss aside a log thicker than his chest, as if it weighed no more than a twig, all unaware that in but a few moments he must pit his own bone, sinew and cunning against that terrific brawn.

Now a mother-bear, playing and roughing it with her newest set of cubs, rolled one of them over with a flip of her paw. As luck would have it, the cub came to rest in the path of the great brown bully as he emerged surlily from a thicket, clanking his paws ominously.

The ill-tempered beast chopped savagely at the tiny cub, and in an instant the mother was flying at his throat—but not before he had countered, with a swiftness that belied his giant size, and locked his jaws upon her head and neck.

From beginning to end Kioga had seen it all. Instinctively he increased the speed of his swing, sensing a crisis. He had always sought to avoid such encounters with the bears in their evil hours; but it was a question of life and death this time, and his decision was instantaneous.

As he hurtled back and forth across the clearing, like a human pendulum gathering velocity with every swing, there had occurred to him in an instant the only method by which he might hope to overcome the giant cinnamon.

Now the great animal reared to his full height in striving to increase his advantage over the smaller female. He weighed probably fifteen hundred pounds. Claws six inches long armed all four vast paws, and his curved yellow incisors had protruded an inch below his black lips before he sank them into the old she's flesh. Hawk did not weigh a seventh as much, but his mighty thews and rapidity of movement were the endowment of a competitive existence like that of prehistoric days, when the price of man's life was measured in terms of his ability to evade or overpower his enemies. He knew to an ounce the limit of his strength, and had, besides, a great equalizer in his long knife.

At the height of a swing he saw the cinnamon rear again.

Letting slip a length of rope between his fingers, he gauged his swing so that it would bring him just above the snarling combatants. Then, as he began the downward swoop, hanging by one hand, with the other he whipped his knife from the scabbard. A fraction of a second he hung poised, then launched himself downward like some sharp-taloned peregrine, full and fair upon the barrellike back of the cinnamon, the while he plunged the knife to its hilt in the shaggy side. The enormous force of his long swinging fall dealt both Kioga and Clubfoot a stunning blow. The old she-bear rolled free.

Surprise gave a momentary advantage to Snow Hawk. Shaking his head to clear it, he hurled himself upon his hulking antagonist. But for his flashing speed, his skull would have been crushed like paper under the vicious blow of the hooked paw which the bear dealt on recovering. The youth, however, was too quickly under and inside that massive arm, fighting tooth and nail to overpower his opponent by force of attack before the bear could gather its scattered senses.

Like a wolverine, Hawk wrapped an arm and both legs about the enormous barrel, while with one free hand he recovered his knife and fleshed it again and again, ever seeking to pierce the heart which beat like a great drum against his own.

Crazed by the bite of the plunging red steel, the bear raked him with its fore-paw. But proximity was his greatest advantage, and buried as he was in the long fur of the animal, flattened against its breast, he was partly protected.

AMOMENT more, and Kioga's ribs and spine had been torn to splinters. But at that instant the knife found the great pulmonary artery, flooding the beast's lungs with the strangling blood. As suddenly as it had begun, the battle was at an end. The great bulk rolled over on its side, the mighty muscles slackened. The cinnamon was beyond all further bullying.

Now the old mother-bear had only to lick her wounds, while the cubs ripped at the dead bear with fang and claw. . . . From that day forward none challenged the authority of the lad who led them. Peace and harmony reigned, at least temporarily; and the addition of several more black bears swelled the number of the little band to about thirty all told.

Following the bears' wise example,



Kioga repaired to the sulphur springs to steep himself in the curative, steaming-hot fluids and relieve the discomfort of that quadruple furrow which had exposed every sinew in his back. The fine scars were to be the lasting reminder of a rake which, prolonged but an instant more, must have pulled out his spine.

He emerged from the springs refreshed and invigorated, to continue the eventful tenor of a life to which he had maintained his right once again by the strength of arm and nerve.

ONCE Kioga and Aki trailed a wolf into a wet, dismal valley west of the crater country. As boy and bear moved down its slope, a haze was rising from the earth. Through the creeping mists the aurora, dull and lowering, gave them their only light, and they traveled more by nose than by eye. From far eastward came the threatening undertone of

the volcanoes. The air was weighted down with a trace of the sulphur smell, and somewhere a storm brewed. It was an hour of unease and foreboding. The boy's nerves were jumping; for even with Aki by his side, he felt alone in the immensity of his wilderness world tonight.

Then suddenly they stood quivering, arrested in mid-stride, nostrils distended to an unknown scent—a scent which made the Snow Hawk's every cell vibrate and tingle, raising the hair on his neck. He clutched at Aki and found him rigid as granite, and rumbling a low unbroken growl through bared fangs. Staring into that dark with expanded pupils, Kioga—who knew so little of fear—was struck with awe and apprehension. The voice of instinct, which links every man to his unknown primordial past, was clanging a bell in his brain, warning him against some awful danger out there in the dungeon gloom of the forest.



Firelight gleamed on a falling ax, and Bull Horn fell twitching, to dream no more. . . . By every canon of Indian warfare, it was Kioga's right to destroy them one by one.

As he took a cautious step forward, a hole yawned before him, two feet deep and three in diameter, into which he fell before he could save himself. He brought up on hands and knees. Something jagged ran into his wrist, with a quick stab of pain. The sudden reek of blood—a wolf's blood—had drowned that other strange scent. He must have just missed one of those wilderness combats he so enjoyed witnessing. Somewhere near, T'yone would be licking his wounds.

Climbing up, he pulled out the splinter which had run into his wrist. He noticed with a start that it was not of wood, nor stone, but something else. As the mists parted, he had a glimpse into the pit.

Hawk had seen death many times in the wilderness. Yet now it revolted him more than on any other occasion. At last he knew why. For what he saw was but half a wolf, the hindquarters, mangled and ground into a shapeless lining for

that hole. It was a piece of broken spine that had pierced his hand.

Again came a whiff of that thrilling unknown scent. Moving against it, he came to another pit in the soft earth. There he saw the wolf's forequarters—also crushed. At the center of the macerated mass was the grisly caricature of the animal's head. The jaws must have been gaped to slash or bite when death came. But they were flattened open now, beyond the spread of any living wolf's jaws, crushed into that wide gape forever. What awful fate had overtaken T'yone?

REALIZATION came to Kioga slowly. These holes in the ground were not natural to the area, nor meteor-pits, as he had at first suspected. They were foot-marks, the spoor left by some monstrous thing—a thing which had literally torn a great wolf in halves, and

trampled the pieces underfoot in separate steps eight feet apart.

Never had young Snow Hawk followed a trail with such a strange admixture of curiosity, eagerness and deep cold fear. Down into the valley it passed, in giant strides. Through a dense thicket that must have stopped any other creature, it broke a tunnel along which even Aki could have walked erect, with headroom to spare. Never, thought Kioga, could their lesser strides overtake the maker of these.

Then they heard a splintering crack in the night, followed by a heavy crash and the snap of breaking branches. They came upon a fallen tree of good size, snapped off at its base as by a giant unworldly force. Following along its prone bole, they saw the vast tracks down on one side. The scent was much stronger. Drops of dew and soil fell into the tracks. The thing could not be far away now; yet it moved with uncanny silence. Then came the sound of suction, as of some heavy body heaving through the swampy mire. A last footprint, fresher, deeper than the others in the cold mud, and filling with the bluish oily waters.

SUDDENLY Kioga quivered, as his remotest red ancestor had done beside the tar-pools of antiquity. For on a ridge across the swamp, not ten arrows away, he saw a monstrous form. Above its somber bulk rose a pillar of steam. The enormous peaked head was almost as great in bulk as Aki's body. It was weighted down by a pair of tremendously thick tusks, extending far out in front like the blades of curved sabers, and gleaming reddish white through the swamp mud which encrusted them. A huge tapering muscular trunk, covered with wiry hairs curled and relaxed, stuffing masses of foliage into the long-lipped maw. Hawk could hear the grind of mighty molars above the internal rumblings of its digestive organs.

The thing's eyes were no bigger than Kioga's own, but red and wicked as coals of fire. From time to time it uttered a heavy hoarse grunt, the basso-profundus of animal sound. However big that majestically armed head with its flapping fanlike ears, it was dwarfed by the ponderous body. Fifteen feet at the shoulder it stood, upon four pillars that more resembled tree-trunks than legs. From back to belly it was clothed in a thick mat of heavy hair, and a thin tail flicked across its massive flanks.

What was this uncouth, forbidding beast, blowing now like some volcanic fumarole, through its long proboscis? From what dark retreat had it emerged to strike terror into the heart of man and animal alike? Where did it go? were there others like it?

Swaying with deceptive slowness, the great beast was moving in complete silence with amazing speed. For a while they kept behind, at a respectful distance. Then, tragically, rain began to fall, filling and washing away those barrel tracks. And they gave up the pursuit to seek sanctuary against the storm, never to locate that trail again.

KIOGA had but one word by which to name the animal he had seen: It could be—it must be—Gu-ne-ba, the Giant Death—that monster of whom the oldest medicine-men spoke, when relating legends of ancient times.

But the amazingly detailed likeness of the beast, which the Snow Hawk drew upon facing pages of Rand's battered log-book, is beyond doubt that of *Elephas Imperialis*—the gigantic elephant which roamed the American western plain in the Cenozoic period. Until now its existence has been deduced purely from fossil data dug from the age-old earth.

A boy's drawing in a log-book is the only extant portrait from life of a monster believed extinct by the keenest authorities of modern times! Like a solitary beacon it flashes out a challenge to old conclusions, and indicates that on a vast unknown land-mass at the earth's top, a wondrous faunal life of changeless antiquity may still evolve, awaiting discovery by crusaders for science....

When not with the bears, or on one of his occasional forays with the puma, Kioga returned to the privacy of his cave to read from the fascinating volumes which treated of the outer world; and doubtless the complicated ways of the civilization about which he read seemed no less curious to him than did the solemn deliberations of the Indian councils to those first explorers who discovered the Americas....

Three years passed thus. Save for the occasional cautious passage of a silent trading-canoe from the far reaches of the forest lands, none violated the gloomy sanctity of the territory which Kioga shared with the bears, and with Mika.

Occasionally the puma lurked in the depths of the cave, to which it attained by a dangerous leap impossible even to

most of its agile kind. But as a rule the great animal exercised its insatiable instinct to hunt, roaming far and wide, sometimes not turning up for weeks on end. Then one night Kioga would wake to the sound of claws on wood, and know that Mika was at the door. All attempts to accustom the bears to Mika's presence were vain, however. They were capable of recognizing this puma from others—that glorious silver coat would have been distinctive anywhere. Yet too great a gap yawned between the two species, of which the mothers of tender toothsome cubs were especially conscious. So only at intervals did man and mountain-lion come together, to hunt awhile as of old.

Repeatedly, during these years, Hawk might have returned to carry out his oath of vengeance upon the Long Knives, but injuries which Aki had sustained in defending him against the treacherous attack of two strange bears detained him for several moons. Then too, he was loath to yield up a mastery over the bears which it had cost him so much effort to gain.

Finally, drawn by one of their periodic migratory urges, a combination of time and circumstance resulted in the presence of the ursine band at a spot within a few days' journey of the Indian capital. Confident that he would be able to find them on his return, Kioga set out to visit the village, his long absence from which had made rumors of his death an accepted fact.

CHAPTER XV

THE SPIRIT OF THE WATERWAYS

THREE years had seen few changes in the village of Hopeka; but the membership of the secret Long Knife Society had become greater, and arrogant almost to the point of open insurrection.

In duty bound, Kioga felt, to begin at once the long-neglected fulfilment of an oath taken years before, he lay in wait above a well-traveled stream, devising ways and means by which he was unwittingly to upset the general conclusions as to his fate.

Several canoes passed unmolested beneath him, but at last came one bearing a single savage whose features had a niche in that gallery of murderers' faces burned into the Snow Hawk's memory on the night of his greatest bereavement.

Down along the rope he slid, with great caution, like some silent, giant in-

sect above its unsuspecting prey. The canoe sagged suddenly beneath an added weight. A hand at the windpipe, the quick wielding of a sharp knife, a moment's desperate struggle—and the savage lay lifeless in the bottom of his own canoe. Tying the rope about a thwart to prevent drifting, Kioga proceeded swiftly to the business in hand.

FROM his quiver, where he had long carried it, he drew the carefully rolled and distinctive headdress which he had abstracted from the lodge of Yellow Weasel three snows past. Propping the dead savage upright by means of a branch fixed to a thwart, he removed the original identifying feather and headband. In its place he set the medicine-bonnet known to every shaman in the Seven Tribes.

A few cunning smears of paint gave the hideous death-mask some resemblance to that of Yellow Weasel. A moment Kioga eyed his work grimly. Then, unfastening the rope, he climbed lightly up it, leaving the craft to continue its interrupted journey. His movements masked by the overhanging leafage, he immediately followed downstream.

As was usual, many canoes had congregated near the entrance to Hopeka. Some were loaded with scouts and hunters, about whom projected the antlers of their deer. Others were deep with tribute or trade stuffs from the more northerly tribal confines, awaiting exchange for the fine skins and basketry for which Hopeka was justly renowned.

Loud greetings passed back and forth as friends long separated met again. From time to time other canoes came upon the scene, gunwales almost awash with their heavy burden, to receive a vociferous welcome. At last, after a short interval, there appeared around the bend in the river a craft bearing a single occupant, but one well calculated to arouse the excitement and wonder of the Indians.

There was a sudden startled hush as all eyes focused upon one who was, to all appearances, the reincarnation of the famous shaman. Like wildfire the word flew through the village that Yellow Weasel had risen from the dead. Soon the river-front was swarming with the curious, women, children, aged warriors—all eager to look upon this miracle.

Slowly the drifting craft bore down upon the spellbound savages, convinced to a man that they were witnessing a

supernatural wonder wrought by the death-effacing medicine of the deceased witch-doctor. The illusion was the more powerfully realized by that gaudy roach of feathers waving gently above the immobile painted face, a headdress famed for generations as the badge of office of the incumbent witch-doctor.

Now that grimly laden canoe came to rest against the bank, its silent occupant steadily facing the assembly. For a time the Indians stood riveted to their places, before some of the less credulous among them began to suspect that all was not as it appeared. Even then fear kept them at a distance until at last, since the figure in the canoe had not once moved, several warriors advanced warily to pay their respects to the risen dead.

Two of these had made courteous flowery speech in the figurative language of the Shoni when a third, struck by the unbendingly immobile aspect of the unearthly visitor, suddenly took his courage in both hands and came close enough to see that they were all the victims of a wild hoax.

He reached forward to tear away the headdress and expose the perpetrator of this irreverent trickery. Scarce had he moved, when the grisly thing in the canoe, deprived of its supports by the gentle rocking of the craft, suddenly pitched forward with the horrible limp ungrainliness of the dead.

The warrior drew back as if stung by a poisonous snake; a near-by squaw sent up a scream of sudden terror. As if this were the match touched to the fuse of their superstitious fears, the congregated hundreds suddenly fell over one another in their efforts to put distance between themselves and the object of their unreasoning fright. In a moment the river-front was deserted.

KIOGA, watching his comedy from the shore near by, completed the rout by imitating the harsh, discordant, lunatic laughter of the whisky-jay, giving additional spur to the horror that had overcome the native boldness of the scattering Indians. Then, knowing that discovery of the deception would soon be a reality, he fell back to await the consequences.

An hour passed before a handful of warriors returned to the scene, their fears at last conquered by curiosity. A fierce cry summoned others. Soon the entire populace had again gathered about the corpse. Children stared morbidly; wom-

en turned away; warriors forgot their recent panic in calling down maledictions upon the perpetrator of this outrage.

But many members of the Long Knife society felt the chill breath of fear along with their anger, for the dead man had ranked high in their councils: the returned headdress, suspected to have been stolen by the almost forgotten Snow Hawk, lent weight to two conclusions arrived at in secret conclave; first, that the incident had been directed especially against themselves; second, that Kioga had returned to harry them.

SENSIBLE of his grievances against them, more sensible still of his ability to betray their treason if he so desired, it was decided to send out twenty picked warriors, who were to terminate the existence of this menace. So it was that Kioga, waiting expectantly on the cliffs, saw the stealthy approach upriver of a war-canoe filled with a score of painted Indians, silent as specters and bristling with arms. Had they been ordinary Shoni warriors, he would have withdrawn to let them pass, for he had no quarrel with Indians as such. But when he perceived the insignia of the Society upon quiver and canoe, he but faded back a little way to watch and wait. For he was the avowed enemy of every man below, whom one by one he identified as participants in the crimes which had transformed him from a happy care-free boy into a warrior sworn to vengeance.

For several miles he swung silently along behind the long-boat, until they perceived the trail he had purposely left as a lure, and disembarked upon the bank, drawing their canoe well into the brush. Leaving a single warrior to guard the craft, they filed silently into the dim aisles of the forest.

In but a few moments the hunting-dogs were already at fault. The spoor ended abruptly and unaccountably where the quarry had left the ground. With a hiss one of the foremost warriors discovered it again farther along, and after a hurried colloquy in bated tones the savage band scattered and took up the chase.

Here the trail became so hot that they knew he could scarce be an arrow-shot distant. Like enraged but voiceless bloodhounds they sped forward, again to be checked at the base of a cliff, which by no means at their disposal could they negotiate.

It was no guileless boy they now pursued, but an outlaw of unsurpassed re-

source, to whom the intricacies of the neighboring timber were as familiar as the crossed lines in his own palm. A well-thought-out plan determined every seemingly erratic twist he gave to his trail, which alternately, dulled and sharpened anew the eagerness of the pursuit. Skillfully he played upon the confidence of the peerless Shoni trackers in their ability to run down game. Like cunning ferrets, inflamed and obsessed by the scent of warm-blooded prey, they unraveled every snarl in the spoor.

Sundown found them close upon his moist footprints where they crossed a newly fallen tree sprawled across a stream. Then again, checkmate on the wet sands beyond, and a baffled return. What they found gave them sudden pause, damping at last the hot ardor of the chase. The Snow Hawk had clung beneath that rude bridge, counted them as they passed by watching their reflections in the streaked mirror of a smooth waterfall a few yards beyond, then swung himself up to double back in the direction whence he had come.

Nightfall compelled a camp in the wilderness, and throwing up a barricade of logs as protection against wild beasts, the Shoni posted a guard for the night and sought a few hours of much-needed sleep. Red Moon, the sentry at the hooded fire, gazed out into the clusters of shining disks which were the eyes of the night-watchers. Overwarmed by the fire, he shrugged the robe from his brawny shoulders and relaxed. Behind him in various attitudes lay the weary Long-Knives, many sleeping with their backs against the cliff-wall. With eyes only for the outer forest, Red Moon sensed nothing of the peril lowering down upon him from above.

BUT thrown by the firelight into gigantic outline upon the rock wall, an ominous black shadow had taken form. Inch by inch, in a descent scarce perceptible, it moved downward. As the sentry stirred, it was motionless. Then again, slower than before, the shadow fell.

From the moment he had begun the descent, the Snow Hawk had exercised every caution to avoid alarming sleepers or sentry. His rope was adjusted securely above, hanging free from a high ledge in such manner that nowhere would he brush against the cliff's face and thus loosen betraying particles of stone. Without sound he had come down almost to

within ten feet of the sentry's head, and now hung motionless as an eagle on spread pinions.

But with all his caution, he had overlooked one thing—the fact that a solid casts a shadow.

IT was this, his shadow on the cliff wall, which first apprised the savage that danger impended. His suddenly slit eyes went from fire to wall in momentary puzzlement. In response to a sudden sense of apprehension he made an involuntary movement of alarm.

That twitch of the muscles, instantly checked though it was by the subtle Indian, did not escape the watchful eye of the Snow Hawk. Knowing instantly that he was all but discovered, he dropped straight down, landing lightly on his feet behind the sentry. Before the surprised brave could voice his quick alarm, Hawk smothered his outcry in the discarded blanket, and dispatched him swiftly, with a dextrous thrust of the long knife deep into the chest cavity.

He had intended only to reconnoiter. It had not seriously entered his head actually to go amid his enemies. But his hand had been forced; and now, while assuring himself that the sentry was dead, he glanced quickly and anxiously at each of the sleepers in turn. None had thus far been disturbed.

Working swiftly, he appropriated the sentry's blanket, throwing it over his shoulders. Examining the dead face a moment, he rolled the corpse on its side, back to the fire, adjusting it in an attitude of sleep. With paint from its belt-pouch he smeared upon his own face an approximation of the design adorning the sentry's. He also transferred the dead man's feather to his own hair.

Though but seventeen, Hawk had fully the height and breadth of the dead warrior. What with the paint, feather and the blanket drawn close about his eyes, his disguise was not easily to be penetrated in the dim light of the hooded fire. He completed it not a moment too soon.

A warrior rose on one elbow, stretched, yawned and moved nearer the fire, not three feet behind the new sentry. To a word of greeting Kioga answered in a voice muffled by the blanket. But the warrior was disposed to be talkative, addressing the sentry thus:

"Dreams of Bull Horn predict the scalping of Snow Hawk tomorrow. What thinks Moon of this dream?"

"*Ha-o!*" was the grunted response. "Red Moon is already dead. For him there will be no tomorrow!"

Bull-Horn started, then relaxed again, laughing shortly and grimly at the gloomy frame of mind in which he found his fellow-conspirator. Then he rose, approached the dead body of Red Moon, touching it with the toe of his moccasin. Kioga also got up as if to stretch.

"Weariness is the enemy of courage," said Bull Horn. Addressing the prone figure by the fire: "Wake, warrior—thy turn to watch," he said. Then, "*Ah-ko!* He slumbers deep," he added, bending over Red Moon.

"Even as a dead man," came the voice from the blanket.

AT Bull Horn's touch, Red Moon's arm fell limp. The body rolled slowly over, facing the sky. A moment the Indian crouched rigid, staring at that red wet wound, before Snow Hawk's words had any meaning for him. Then, hissing on his indrawn breath, he wheeled and was about to utter the yell of warning, when a ring of steel shrank about his throat. A single word—"Awena!"—was uttered in his ear, almost it seemed, with a sob. Firelight gleamed on a falling ax, and Bull Horn fell twitching, to dream no more.

Leaving the body where it sank, Nemesis moved among the snoring Indians, tomahawk bare under the blanket. By every canon of Indian warfare, wherein stealth and secrecy rank equal with flaunting valor, it was now Kioga's right to destroy them, one by one, as they lay there unconscious.

With this intent, he paused above a sleeping brave. Up rose the war-ax, then lowered slowly. The brave was muttering something in his sleep. In that moment the Snow Hawk knew that he could not bring himself to kill in cold blood—a concession to that white breeding of his which dominated him more than he knew.

Instead his hand fell on the savage's shoulder. The Indian roused with the suddenness of the light sleeper.

"Dreams of the warrior are troubled," whispered a voice at his ear. "Does he too hear ghost of Awena whistling over camp?"

The startled Indian saw in the dark form only a sentry going to rest after a watch. His answer contained a trace of

sarcasm and impatience at being thus disturbed.

"Red Moon talks like woman! Would that this hand had struck Awena dead," he grunted with a low brutal laugh. "Then her braid would hang at this belt, and the bow-cord of Mokuyi also!"

"Great ones above grant all just wishes," muttered the blanketed figure, holding something forth in the fire-glow. The better to see it, the savage rose on one arm.

Quick as a flash, a thin noose fell about his neck, and was jerked taut. It was Mokuyi's bowstring, sealing the cruel laughter in that swelling throat.

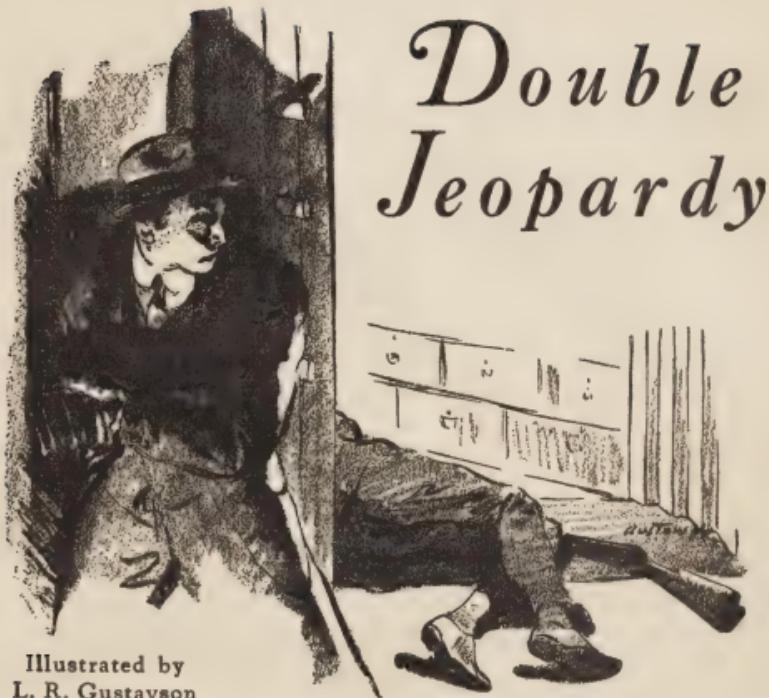
As the Indian writhed in the death-struggle, silent as a decapitated viper, he struck blindly with drawn knife, stabbing Kioga twice through the muscle beside the neck close to the jugular. The thrashing legs kicked out, awakening two other savages, whose yells aroused the whole camp into a fever of wildest confusion.

Still at advantage by reason of blanket and paint, Kioga sped toward the fire, above which dangled his only means of escape. A brave who had stirred the embers to a blaze and looked upon the dead face of Red Moon, turned and saw the Snow Hawk's bounding approach. In an instant his eye pierced that hasty disguise. Too quickly for accuracy, his ax hurtled at the head of the impostor, missed, and felled a Long Knife beyond.

As he reached for his club, he was enveloped in a whirling blanket and knocked headlong into the fire, plunging the camp into black darkness, under cover of which an active batlike shadow vanished unseen up the face of the cliff.

WHEN again the scattered embers of fire were gathered and blown into flame, the leaders of that punitive party looked into each others' eyes, and found that awe and fear had replaced anger and the grim determination to kill. Four of their warriors lay dead, one by their own tomahawk. A fifth, struggling to cast off the blazing blanket, was too badly burned to count upon in an emergency.

Contrary to all precedent, the fox had turned to slash at the pursuing hounds, invaded the very kennels beneath their jaws, and—most awesome of all—had left no trace, search though they did for one. What but a spirit or a ghost walks the earth leaving no footprint behind?



Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

Double Jeopardy

According to the Constitution of the United States, a man cannot be twice placed in jeopardy of his life for the same offense. And yet—

By FORBES PARKHILL

HENWOOD glared defiantly at the warden. His arms were folded across his chest, as required by the prison rules, when a convict was in the presence of an official. The warden, seated at his desk, drew a card from a steel filing cabinet, adjusted his spectacles, and cleared his throat.

"Convict 88-742," he said to Henwood, "you have served more than eight years of a life sentence for the murder of one Mirgolas. Maybe it'll interest you to know that this fellow Mirgolas has turned up, alive."

Henwood stared. For a moment his pallid prison face registered no change of expression. Then he swallowed. Next he wet his lips. Slowly his fingers began to dig into the biceps of his folded arms. Tiny beads of perspiration gathered on his colorless temples, where the hair had begun to recede. He closed his eyes, tight, and shook his head, as if trying

to rid himself of the lingering suggestion of some preposterous dream. His lips moved, but no words came.

"It means," the warden continued, "that you will receive a full pardon from the governor, and will be released almost immediately, Henwood. . . . What's the matter with you, man? You don't seem to understand what I'm saying!"

Henwood swallowed—hard. And found words. "Eight years," he said huskily, "and five months, and eighteen days. The best eight years of my life. Wiped out. Because somebody—made a mistake!"

"Now, now!" soothed the warden. "You mustn't be bitter, Henwood."

THE convict's lip curled. His pale blue eyes were hard.

"Robbed of the best years of my life! And you tell me not to be bitter, sir! . . . Are they sure it's Mirgolas?"

"The district attorney is satisfied. Says there is no question about it. He already had recommended a pardon. This Mirgolas, it seems, has just returned from abroad. Said he had but recently learned he had been reported murdered, and that some one had been convicted of the crime. The principal reason he returned, he says, was to make certain you were freed, Henwood.—What's the matter, man? You look—Here, sit down in this chair. D'you want some water?"

HENWOOD dropped into the chair, and shook his head. Then he asked huskily:

"But who—was the man who was—murdered? There was a body—identified as the body of Mirgolas. I never saw it—but at the trial—the testimony showed—"

The warden, eying him narrowly, broke in:

"You mean to say, Henwood, that you murdered the wrong man?"

"No, no, no, warden! I murdered no one! I am entirely innocent! But some one was murdered! There must have been a body, else—"

"The letter from the prosecutor says Mirgolas has explained everything, Henwood—but it doesn't tell just what explanation he made. Henwood, practically every one of the thousands of convicts I've handled, since I've been warden, has claimed he has been wrongfully convicted. You are the only one of those thousands to be proved innocent. As you leave our institution to start life again where you left off, I want to congrat—"

"Start where I left off, sir?" Henwood broke in bitterly. "Will the bank take me back as teller? Will it promote me to cashier—the position I'd be holding now, if it weren't for this? Will the wife who has divorced me, on the ground I was a felon, come back to me and bring our baby with her? She's married again, sir. Will the—"

"Now, now, Henwood! You mustn't be bitter. You'd made a good record here, and except for your continued surliness and—"

"Who wouldn't be surly, warden, when he was serving a life sentence for a crime he didn't commit?"

"You have been putting your time to good advantage, Henwood. Studying law, your card shows. Not, I trust, with the same objective that inspires many of the inmates, who study it to learn how

better to break it. Such study must have seemed useless to a lifer; but now, you see how it has turned out that you can make use of it! You can—"

But Henwood wasn't listening. His pale nostrils were distended, his respiration rapid.

"Why did Mirgolas wait more than eight years to tell the truth?" he almost shrieked. "Why didn't he come forward at the time, and prove my innocence? Why did he wait until I had been convicted of murder, branded a convict, a killer? Why did he wait until I had been robbed of my wife and my baby—until my career had been blasted—my life ruined? Why—why—"

"You can't carry on this way, Henwood," the warden broke in hastily. "Calm down, now, or I'll have to send you right back to your cell. Why, man, instead of being bitter against Mirgolas, I'd think you'd be grateful to him for saving you from spending the rest of your life in prison!"

"Grateful? After—"

"Now, now, don't get started again, Henwood. You're excited—almost hysterical, man. Calm down, and think it over, and you'll see I'm right. In less than a week you'll be pardoned, and you'll be calling on Mirgolas to express your heartfelt gratitude for what he has done for you!"

IN less than a week Henwood was pardoned, and was calling on Mirgolas at his hotel. He was dressed neatly, in an inexpensive serge ready-made. The only outward evidence of his years spent in prison was his pallor.

Mirgolas was a large man, of Henwood's own age, but ruddy, jovial, faultlessly tailored, and radiating every evidence of success and prosperity. He met the pardoned convict at the door of the presidential suite, gripping him warmly by the hand, and flinging his left arm about his shoulder.

"Henwood!" he cried. "Dear old fellow! How can you forgive me for waiting so long? I didn't know—didn't realize the terrible thing that had happened to you, old man, until a few weeks ago. Of course I hurried here as speedily as I could! Sit down—sit down! . . . Cigar? . . . Cocktail? No? You'll pardon me if I have one?"

Henwood seated himself stiffly on the edge of an overstuffed chair. After eight years of steel and stone, he was ill at ease amid such surroundings.

"I want," he said, his voice as stiff as his attitude, "to express my—my gratitude for saving me from a lifetime in prison. I'll never forget what you've done for me, Mirgolas."

Mirgolas brushed away his thanks with a generous gesture of his arm.

"Forget it, old man! If I'd only known sooner that you were serving time for—for something you hadn't done! You've grown a little bald, Henwood, since the days we were tellers together in the Tri-State National."

"Eight years in the penitentiary don't make a man look much younger," Henwood said dryly. "You haven't changed much, Mirgolas. You look quite prosperous."

Mirgolas shrugged modestly. "Lucky breaks, old man. Took a long chance in the export business last year, and made a killing. May be flat broke next year."

"You always were a plunger, Mirgolas, even back in the days when we were tellers together in the Tri-State. Dabbling around in stocks, even then, and making money on the side. I was always too conservative, I guess. . . . It's a real pleasure to find you alive, Mirgolas, quite aside from my selfish pleasure because your reappearance meant my liberty. You see, like everybody else, I thought you were dead!"

Mirgolas threw back his head and laughed boisterously.

"Everybody was surprised when I told 'em just what happened—district attorney, and governor, and everybody! But I proved who I was. And that was all that was necessary to show you hadn't murdered me. Funny, the way it happened!"

"Just how *did* it happen, Mirgolas? I've read what the newspapers have printed, but I haven't got it exactly straight, yet."

Mirgolas drained his glass. "Well,

Henwood, you know how I used to work overtime at the bank every Wednesday and Friday evening? Some slick crook got wise to the fact, and he took advantage of it to try to rob the bank. One Wednesday afternoon he called at my rooms, and said the tailor had sent him to get a suit of mine to be cleaned and pressed, and the landlady gave it to him.

"He dressed in my clothes, so no one would suspect anything if they saw him by chance, in the bank that evening—think it was me, you know. Or maybe he wanted to show himself in my clothes afterward, so I'd be suspected of the robbery. I can only guess at the real reason."

"THIS other man," said Henwood, frowning slightly, "—this crook, Mirgolas—I never heard of him before."

"Nor did anybody else, Henwood. Well, I chanced to go to the bank earlier that evening, and found the crook at work. I snatched up the old sawed-off shotgun—the one we kept hidden under the counter, Henwood, for use in case of bank robberies—and let him have it. Darned near blew the top of his head off."

Henwood nodded. "I see. When they found his body, it was dressed in your clothes. The face was blown away. So no wonder it was identified as your body! But I don't see why—"

"I'm coming to that, Henwood. You don't see why I ran away, do you? Well, I was just a kid. I'd killed a man. I was panicky. I didn't realize I was justified in killing him. I was crazy with fear, and I followed my first impulse, which was to get rid of the body, and beat it. I loaded it into the first car I saw, and drove out of town, out toward the cliff road. I threw the body over the edge where the road zigzags up



"I've been studying law,
you know, back at the
penitentiary."

the face of the cliff, and drove on. The car ran out of gas. I was afraid to show myself at a filling-station, because the auto and my clothes were spotted with blood. I abandoned the car, and fled afoot."

Henwood nodded again. "The car happened to be my car, Mirgolas. When

"It's been almost nine years since I've smoked a cigar," he told them. "I've just killed this man."



they found it and the body, they arrested me. I couldn't prove an alibi. The body was identified as yours, by the papers in the clothing. The police evolved the theory that you had detected me in the act of robbing the bank, and that I had murdered you. It sounded plausible enough to the jury. If it hadn't been a case of circumstantial evidence, they'd have sent me to the chair!"

Mirgolas held up his hands in a gesture of horror. "Think of it! My old friend, Henwood! I never dreamed of such a thing, old fellow! Of course, crazy kid that I was, I thought they were looking for me, for murder. I made my way across the Mexican border—and I've never been back in the United States until ten days ago."

"What," Henwood asked curiously, "prompted you to come back?"

"I learned the truth from a traveling salesman, only a short time ago. By that time I knew, of course, that I had been fully justified in shooting the bank robber, and that I couldn't be held for murder. When I learned that you—my old friend, Henwood—were serving time for supposedly murdering *me*—why, I took the first ship home, to see that justice was done!"

The pardoned convict bit his lip.

"And what happened to the loot, Mirgolas? An audit showed eighty thousand dollars missing. It was never found. They charged that I had hidden it."

Mirgolas rubbed first one ruddy cheek and then the other with the palm of one hand.

"I suppose it was on the crook's body when I rolled it over the cliff. Maybe it fell out of his clothing, and was scattered in the timber. . . . No! Wait!

. . . Seems to me I remember—yes! Something caught in a crevice near the top as the body slid down the face of the cliff! Maybe it was—"

"The loot!" finished Henwood excitedly. "Do you suppose, Mirgolas, it could still be there, after these years?"

Mirgolas shrugged. "Hardly a chance. But we might drive out and take a look. I'll ring for a taxi, Henwood. We'll see."

"I have a car," broke in Henwood. "I borrowed it from an old friend. If you don't mind riding in a 1928 model—"

PRESENTLY they were bowling along the highway, leading from the city toward the spot where the body supposed to be that of Mirgolas had been found, years before.

"Of course the bank will take you back, now that I've proved your innocence," Mirgolas remarked to the pardoned convict.

Henwood's jaw muscles tensed.

"I don't know. I've been studying law, you know—while I was at the penitentiary."

"Really? That's the spirit, old man! Can you really learn enough that way to pass the bar examination and qualify for practice? I should think—"

"I learned one thing that's going to be very important to me," Henwood interrupted quickly. "It's a part of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. . . . They've paved this road since I drove it last. And they've built dozens of new filling-stations and hot-dog stands. . . . Here's the cliff road. Tell me when to stop."



They had almost reached the top of the zigzagging cliff road before Mirgolas gave the word to halt, and Henwood drew up at the side of the road.

"It ought to be right about in here," mused Mirgolas. "They must have changed the grade slightly when they paved the road. It doesn't look exactly familiar. But we'll get out and look."

"Wait a second, Mirgolas," said Henwood. "I don't think it'll do a great deal of good to look for the money. Do you?"

Mirgolas forced a smile. "It would be strange if some of the highway workers failed to find it when the road was paved."

"I didn't mean that, Mirgolas." Henwood hitched himself about behind the wheel to face his companion. "I meant, there never was any money here. Was there?"

"How should I know?" replied Mirgolas uneasily. "I told you—"

"A lie!" finished Henwood, and shoved his right hand deep into his coat pocket.

Mirgolas shrank away. "You mean to say that I took the money with me, Henwood?"

"Some of it, yes. But not the entire eighty thousand. Because you'd stolen most of that money long before the killing!"

"You—you're crazy, Henwood!"

"No, I'm not crazy! I've just begun to figure it all out, since I learned you were still alive! I knew something was wrong with the picture before, but I hadn't been able to determine what was wrong, because I was basing my reasoning on the premise that *you* were the victim of the murder, Mirgolas!"

"But I've explained it all to you, Henwood! Can't you see?"

"Sure, I can see. I can see that you'd been speculating with the bank's funds until you got in so deep you had to do something desperate. You first planned the robbery merely to cover up your own thefts—didn't you, Mirgolas?"

"You don't know what you're talking about, Henwood!"

"But you told yourself that, as long as you were going to frame the robbery, you might as well take enough to make it worth while—enough for what you'd call 'a killing.' That step led to the next—the plans to cover up your flight. Mirgolas, you certainly planned it cleverly!"

"Why, this is all tommyrot, Henwood! Sheer guesswork!"

HENWOOD sneered. "Did you arrange with your pal to wear your clothes to divert suspicion while he was robbing the bank, and then double-cross him while you were quarreling over the loot—and kill him? Or did you deliberately

plan, from the very first, to dress him in your clothes, and then murder him, so his body would be identified as yours, and you could escape pursuit the better? . . . Answer, Mirgolas!"

"I told you exactly what happened, Henwood. I swear it! I caught him in the bank, and killed him!"

"You're a good liar, Mirgolas—but not quite good enough. The first weak point in your lie, is your claim that you fled because you feared you would be charged with murder. Any child knows you couldn't be held for shooting a robber!"

MIRGOLAS rubbed his hands together. "I didn't know the law, Henwood. I was just a kid—and panicky!"

"Not so panicky that you forgot to alter my accounts to make it appear I was the one who was short, Mirgolas! Not such a kid that you didn't deliberately plan to flee in my car with the body, so the crime would be fastened on me! . . . Sit still, Mirgolas! Don't try to get out of this car!"

"You're crazy, Henwood! Your term in prison has left you unbalanced, man!"

Henwood went on relentlessly: "And you expected me to believe that perhaps the loot had caught in a crevice as the body slid down the cliff! That's the second weak point in your lie, Mirgolas. If you had lost fifty thousand dollars of the bank's money speculating, you still had thirty thousand in cash when you fled."

Mirgolas placed a placating hand on Henwood's arm.

"You must get a grip on yourself, man! Calm down. Don't be bitter. Man alive, you don't resent what I've done for you, do you? I came back to the United States to save you from a life term in prison!"

Henwood laughed harshly.

"You tell me not to be bitter! After you've stolen more than eight years of my young manhood! After you've robbed me of my wife and baby, ruined my career, wrecked my life! And you did it deliberately, with cold, calculated premeditation! . . . You rat!"

"But I came back, Henwood! I came back! Came back to free you from prison. Don't forget that, Henwood! Don't forget that I might have left you there for the rest of your life!"

Henwood sneered. "You didn't come back because your conscience hurt you! You didn't come back just to free me from prison. What's the real reason,

Mirgolas, just to clear your record, so you could do business in the United States? To pose as a hero, by freeing me from prison at no cost to yourself? Or—was there a woman in it? Maybe you came back to get married; and you had to clear your record first. Is that it?"

Mirgolas shrank back against the side of the car. His right hand was fumbling behind him for the door handle.

"You're out of your mind, Henwood! You've forgotten the debt you owe me!"

"No, Mirgolas—I am prepared to pay the debt I owe you. To the last penny! But there is one item I have not acknowledged. My time in the penitentiary, studying law, has not been wasted. If nothing else, I've learned the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution!"

"Wha—what are you talking about, Henwood?"

"You wouldn't know—you rat! So I'll tell you: *'No person shall be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb.'* Do you know what 'double jeopardy' means, Mirgolas?"

"Double jeopardy? I can't explain, but I know—"

"This is what it means, Mirgolas. Listen! I have been tried and convicted of murdering you, Mirgolas, and I have been pardoned. My life has once been in jeopardy on the charge of murdering you. Under the United States Constitution, it cannot twice be put in jeopardy for killing you. . . . Now—do—you—understand?"

The color swiftly ebbed from Mirgolas' once-ruddy face. His lip was quivering. His eyes were staring.

"You—you mean—"

"I mean, Mirgolas, that after I kill you, the law can't touch me! It has already convicted me of killing you—once! It can't put my life in jeopardy twice for the same offense. . . . You deliberately wrecked my life, Mirgolas. I am going to make you pay with your own life!"

Mirgolas suddenly twisted the door handle behind him. The door swung open. He flung himself out backward.

HENWOOD whipped an automatic pistol from his pocket. His first bullet smashed through Mirgolas' shoulder.

Mirgolas spun about and started to run back down the road. Henwood hunched himself over from behind the wheel. He was twisted at an awkward

angle as he fired the second bullet. It caught Mirgolas low in the back. He went sprawling. He rolled over convulsively, just behind the back wheel.

Coolly Henwood stepped from the car. His third bullet sheared through front and back of the mud-guard before it plowed into Mirgolas' kicking body.

Mirgolas shrieked. The shriek ended in a gurgle as he struggled to clamber to his feet. A bullet through the hip brought him down again. He drew up his good leg, close to his body. He covered his face with his hands. Deliberately, Henwood pumped the rest of the clip into his quivering body.

Henwood hailed the first passing car.

"When you reach the nearest phone, call the sheriff and tell him I've just killed a man," he calmly told the terrified motorist. "Tell him I'll be waiting here for him. And be sure to tell him to bring a deputy from the district attorney's office with him!"

He stepped over the huddled body of Mirgolas, and removed a cigar from the vest pocket. Coolly he stripped the transparent wrapper and the band, and lighted it with an unshaken hand. The motorist gave a horrified, choking cry, and his car leaped ahead and disappeared around a sharp turn in the cliff road.

THE sheriff, accompanied by three deputies and a deputy district attorney, found Henwood lolling back in the seat of his car, calmly blowing streamers of smoke toward the sky.

"It's been almost nine years since I've smoked a cigar," he told them, before they'd even had time to ask him what had happened. "I just killed this man. I left the pistol on the running-board, although you won't need it. . . . Which of you is the deputy district attorney?"

"I am," said the prosecutor. "I remember you, Henwood. I assisted in preparing the murder case against you, nine years ago. And now—"

Without need for a command from the sheriff, his aides had drawn their revolvers and had trained them upon Henwood. Now one of them was searching him.

"And now," Henwood smiled at the deputy prosecutor, "you are expecting to prepare your second case against me. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but I'm afraid you have no case!"

The prosecutor scowled. "You confessed you killed him. You can't claim self-defense, for he was unarmed. What

do you think your 'out' is? Insanity?" As the prosecutor spoke, the sheriff was "sighting" through the two bullet-holes in the mud-guard, caused by Henwood's third bullet.

"My 'out,'" yawned Henwood lazily, "is merely the little matter of the Constitution of the United States. To be exact, the Fifth Amendment—the one pertaining to double jeopardy. As a lawyer, you know what that means. You've already tried me and convicted me of the murder of Mirgolas. You can't try me a second time on the same charge!"

The deputy district attorney gasped. He called the sheriff aside, and explained the situation to him.

"The helluvit is," he groaned, "he's absolutely right! He's got us absolutely licked! You can't beat the Constitution of the United States! We can jail him for investigation, but he can get out on the business end of a habeas corpus so quick it'll make our heads swim!"

"They's more'n one way of skinning a cat," observed the sheriff. "But if you say we can't hold him—why, that ends it. We can't, that's all!" He turned to Henwood.

"Fella, the law sharp says you got us licked—that I can't arrest you. So I'm going to let you go. But I'm warning you to get out of my county, as fast as that old wreck will carry you, 'fore I jail you on general principles!"

Henwood was startled, and admitted it. "I expected to have to put up a court fight for my liberty," he admitted. "But—what's the use of talking? Good-by, gentlemen!"

His car rattled and shook as he started the motor. The prosecutor, and the sheriff and his deputies, stared after it as it swung around the first sharp turn.

"WHAT," asked the prosecutor of the sheriff, "have you got up your sleeve? What did you mean by saying, 'There's more than one way of skinning a cat'?"

The sheriff smirked, and spat.

"The Constitution of the United States aint got any authority over blowouts. That bullet that sheared through the mud-guard sliced through the side-wall of the tire. The tube was starting to bulge out. When he hits one of them sharp turns on the cliff road—blooey! Over the cliff he goes, car and all—the indirect victim of one of his own bullets! . . . Hark! . . . Did ye hear that crash?"

The Trail



"These here are supposed to smell out gold as far away as four miles—a real powerful doodle-bug," said Maud.

MONTE CARLO

OUR friend Horse-face Maud the prospector's wife again uses her wits in surprising fashion to defend those nearest and dearest to her.

THE golden heat of late afternoon throbbed on the tar-papered roof of the cook-shack in the little prospecting camp at Gold Valley. A hot wind capered down the cañon, rattling the brittle branches of the juniper trees, and bringing to the nostrils of Horseface Maud Tackaberry the pungency of purple sage.

As she swept, she sang. Years of desert climate had made her voice rauous, but she still liked the sound of it. Not only did it soothe and cheer her when life got her down, but it often inspired her with crafty ideas when she needed them.

Lustily, she sang:

Oh, let sixteen gamblers lay a hand on my coffin,

Oh, let sixteen cowboys come carry me along.

And take me to Boot Hill and cover me with roses—

I'm jist a young cowboy and I know I done wrong.

But the music didn't help. For the problem with which she wrestled was too elusive. The problem was what to do about an eighteen-year-old girl who was making a mess of her life.

Tall, leathery, black-haired and gimlet-eyed, Maud Tackaberry was a re-

markable woman with a powerful personality, but she had forgotten what the mind of an eighteen-year-old girl is like. For thirty-two years Mrs. Tackaberry had been celebrated as a gold-camp cook, earning enough to grubstake her prospector-husband Tellurium, when he wasn't able to wheedle grubstakes out of the ranchers and saloon-keepers he knew.

His latest grubstaker was a young alfalfa rancher named Walter Jernigen. Walt had listened sympathetically to Tellurium's talk about the hole he was digging. Walt had possibly been influenced by his tender regard for the Tackaberrys' pretty blue-eyed daughter Nevada.

Horseface Maud had hoped that this romance would lead to marriage and a good home for Nevada, but it had not. Nevada was interested in the young rancher for a while; then she jilted him. Now the girl was back in camp, wiltingly in love with Tony Billings—who, Horseface Maud feared, was going to be just another prospector. And she wanted something better for the girl than the kind of life a prospector's wife led.

Moreover, Tony was in a dangerous spot. He had come to the little prospecting camp in the high, sun-parched mountains of southern Nevada as a "fugitive from injustice," as Horseface Maud described it. Accidentally, he had killed a man. In self-defense, he had punched Nick Murlow, the drunken political boss of Merchant City, Michigan,

of the Doodle Bug

By
GEORGE
F. WORTS

Illustrated by
Monte Crews



and Murlow had crashed through a window and fallen twenty stories to his death.

Tony had fled to Nevada, not because of guilt, but because the other members of the Merchant City political gang knew he knew too much about their corrupt practices. That gang wanted him dead, so that he could not return to Merchant City and testify against them. Recently, they had sent one of their number, their city treasurer—one Beefsteak Harry Hickman—to Gold Valley to kill Tony. That scheme had been frustrated, by Horseface Maud. But she knew that those Eastern crooks would strike again.

In some ways, of course, Tony Billings' attitude toward Nevada made the situation easier to deal with. Tony liked Nevada a lot, but he treated her like a child—an unvarnished fact that was making Nevada cry her eyes out every night, and making her lose weight when she was pretty slender already. But the girl continued to adore the young prospector. In Nevada's own words to her mother: "It's true love, Mom. Gosh, how I love that man!"

It was pathetic, Maud thought as she sang. But she might have sung louder if she could have sensed the sinister events which loomed ahead for her peaceful camp.

AT the moment Maud Tackaberry's leather lungs were fairly bursting with sadness for her child, Nevada was in a fair way of solving her problems with her own methods—methods almost as old as the mountains in which she was using them. She was helping Tony Billings put down his prospect shaft, show-

ing him what an industrious little helper she could be in the daytime, and what a charming and alluring creature she could be by lamplight. Every day, she helped him at the shaft; every evening she carefully made up her pretty tanned face, dressed her hair bewitchingly, and got into a frilly dress that would have called Tony's attention to the alluring charms of her slim young figure if he hadn't remained so blind. To her, he was the most romantic man she had ever known.

And Tony? Some day soon he would have to return to Michigan to testify those men into prison—provided he got there alive. He preferred staying in Nevada. He loved this desert country with its fierce sunlight, its blue skies, its vivid coloring. And he hated to leave this shaft he was digging. He had found a small chunk of gold-bearing rock in this hole, and he was anxious to find the vein from which it had come. If he found that vein, they'd all be rich. . . .

Tony was at the bottom of the hole filling the small steel bucket with broken rock, and Nevada was at the windlass, hoisting and dumping the bucket as he filled it. She was a little pale this morning, and a little shaky. She hadn't slept well last night. Yet her eyes, which were the clear, bright, deep blue of cobalt crystals, were not tear-stained.

Working the windlass, with its big iron handle, she looked young and frail

and tender. But her fragility was deceptive. Her figure, tightly encased in overalls too small for her, was nicely rounded in spite of its slenderness. With her tousled hair, she was pretty and she was cute. But she didn't look like a child. At this moment, she felt pretty bitter because Tony Billings, when he looked at her, saw, not a young woman, capable of a woman's passions, but a child—a nice kid.

PERHAPS it was resentment, or perhaps her lack of sleep that caused the accident. She cranked up the windlass until the handle of the bucket was within easy reach. Dozens of times she had swung it up onto the safety platform without accident. This time she was not so careful. As she swung the bucket, it slipped from her hand, and an edge of the heavy little bucket struck the small toe of her left foot.

Fortunately, the bucket did not fall back down the hole, or it might have been the end of Tony Billings. He heard a sudden shriek of rage and pain, and when he scrambled up the ladder and reached her, Nevada was sitting down holding the toe of her miner's shoe with both hands. She wasn't saying a word—audibly. Her lips were moving rapidly, and the rankest amateur in the art of lip-reading could have guessed that the words her mouth was silently shaping were the kind that red-blooded miners reserve especially for occasions like this.

Wrathful as she was, she wasn't crying, but when she saw Tony's expression of anxiety, she could not let such a perfect opportunity slip by. Her chin quivered. Her nose twitched. Her eyes filled with actual tears. She sobbed.

Tony knelt beside her, quickly unlaced the shoe and removed the sock and examined the little toe. It was red, but not swollen.

"Gee, kid," Tony said, "that's a shame!" And when that and other consolations failed to stop the sobs, he put his arms about her, patted her back and murmured the soothing "There, there," with which men have tried to comfort sobbing womankind since time immemorial.

"Oh, Tony!" cried Nevada, throwing her arms about his neck. "Kiss me!"

Tony kissed her cheek. Then he placed his hands on her shoulders and held her off and looked at her with his head tilted a little, his eyes quizzical, a faint sympathetic grin at his lips. It

was the particular attitude and expression of Tony's that Nevada adored most.

"Stop crying, sis," he said, "and I'll buy you the biggest lollipop I can find in town on my next trip."

That, of course, ruined everything. Until then, it had been a rapturous, a perfect moment. Nevada's tears dried on her cheeks, or so it seemed, from the very heat of her indignation. Her blue eyes blazed.

She said bitterly, "I wish you'd stop treating me like a child."

"I really should," Tony agreed lightly. "You're getting to be a pretty big girl."

"I hate you!" Nevada said with fury. "I'm eighteen. Almost nineteen! I'm a woman! Stop treating me like a child!"

"O.K., Miss Tackaberry. It's time to knock off. That supper bell will be ringing in a minute."

They went up and over the hill and along the well-worn path to the cook-shack. They were within sight of it when they heard a car coming up the cañon. It came around the bend and into view—a small, green pick-up truck, heavily loaded.

"It's Walt!" Nevada cried. She wasn't glad to see her father's grubstaker. A few days ago she had told Walt in no uncertain terms that she didn't and couldn't love him, and she was embarrassed at the thought of this meeting. Then a purely feminine part of her mind released an idea that was almost as old as these sun-parched mountains. Walt was young and attractive—just about Tony's age, which was twenty-six. She would make a fuss over Walt. She would make such a fuss over Walt that Tony, if there was a drop of red blood in his veins, would be furious with jealousy. What Tony really needed, she decided, was a good stiff dose of jealousy.

THEN she saw Walt was not alone—
A woman was in the cab beside him. The truck stopped at the cook-shack just as Horseface Maud came outside. Walt and his passenger alighted from the truck, and Nevada saw and knew the worst at a glance, for Walt's passenger was a small and dimpling and smartly dressed blonde girl.

Nevada heard Walt introducing the cute stranger to Mrs. Tackaberry as Mrs. Holly, of Michigan.

With her little girl's smile, Mrs. Holly said: "Oh, Mrs. Tackaberry, I heard all about you in Detroit. I heard that won-

derful radio speech you made. And when my husband and I decided to get a divorce, I decided to come to Nevada, and I did so want to meet you."

The beautiful blonde babbled on: "Mr. Jernigen very obligingly brought me out. I hate towns, and I've been hoping you'd let me stay out here for the six weeks to establish my legal residence. Won't you please let me stay?"

Mrs. Tackaberry chuckled; and for once her deep-seeing black eyes failed to penetrate the mark of a deceiver. The little blonde girl was certainly cute, and it would be nice having somebody lively around. But she said: "It's pretty rough out here for a girl like you, Mrs. Holly."

The blonde girl dimpled. "They told me in Las Vegas you're the best cook in Nevada."

"Well, that's right," Maud affirmed. "I am. But I set a mighty plain table."

Mrs. Holly gurgled with laughter. "Oh, I'm not worrying about that. And I want to get away from it all. Oh, how I love this perfectly gorgeous country—this sky, these darling old hills, and this quaint, quaint camp. It's too marvelous. Isn't there some little shack you can tuck me away in? I'll promise not to bother anybody, and I'll promise to help. Gracious! Is that lovely quilt on that frame one you're making *yourself*?"

"Ayop!"

"How perfectly marvelous! Oh, I'd love to help you. Oh, please let me stay, Mrs. Tackaberry!"

Horseface Maud felt herself warming. And golly, what pretty hair she had—real golden blonde.

"O.K.," she said. "It'll cost you thirty a month for board, and I'll rent you a shack, with a cot and bedding, for ten more. But I warn you, there aint any conveniences here. All outdoor plumbing."

"I'll just love it, Mrs. Tackaberry!" the lovely little blonde caroled.

Tony knelt beside her and examined the toe. "Gee, kid," he said, "that's a shame!"

Mrs. Tackaberry now introduced her to Nevada and Tony. "This is my daughter Nevada, Mrs. Holly. And this is Tony Billings."

Nevada saw a gleam in Tony's eyes that she herself had never aroused. Mrs. Holly smiled sweetly at Nevada, then looked eagerly at Tony.

"You're not the Mr. Billings there's been all this excitement about!" she cried.

"Ayop!" Horseface promptly answered for him. "He got through the police of eight States gettin' here. We're makin' a gold-miner of him." Horseface was very proud of Tony.

Mrs. Holly said, "We're from the same State, Mr. Billings. I'm from Michigan too—Detroit. Oh, it's just too thrilling. I know I'm going to love it here."

"You'll love the country," Tony said.

"Supper is dished up," Horseface Maud interrupted. "Come and get it."

NEVADA had so far not acknowledged Walt's presence. She did so now, taking full advantage of the lull.

"Why, Walt!" she cried. "I didn't see you!"

She ran to him and seized his hands and gazed up into his face as if she were welcoming the return of a long-lost lover. She didn't kiss him, but her enthusiasm at seeing him left no doubt in anyone's mind where her affections really lay. The only trouble was that Tony seemed blind to it all.

He and Mrs. Holly were already treating each other like old friends—even more than old friends. They talked of Detroit and of Merchant City, allusions



which meant nothing to Nevada. They were lively and gay and laughing, completely absorbed in each other. Nevada didn't even know what they were laughing about. Most of their jokes were about things she didn't know about. She felt very much out of things.

Tony was apparently intoxicated by the blonde girl. But when he saw Nevada deliberately holding Walt's hand at the supper-table, he looked a little surprised.

Nevada weighed the value of that reaction to the fraction of an ounce—and decided to play the game more strongly. After supper she asked Walt to take a walk with her in the moonlight. There was a full moon, and the night was made for romance and love. Mrs. Holly promptly said: "Oh, Mr. Billings, won't you take me for a walk too? I'd just adore it."

He took her. They went in the opposite direction from the walk Walt and Nevada were taking. The blonde babbled. She told him how much she admired his courage, and how the State of Michigan admired his courage. She told him why she was getting a divorce. Her husband, she confided, was a brute and a beast. He insulted her. He often left her at home alone all evening.

Tony said gravely: "If you'd only had my phone number!"

Mrs. Holly didn't laugh. "I took my marriage pretty seriously. I think a person should. I hated to see it go on the rocks."

"For every rock in Nevada," Tony said, "there's a divorce decree."

"You're cynical. You'll meet a girl some day. I'll race you up that hill!"

THE other pair of walkers that evening weren't having nearly such a pleasant time. At least, Walt Jernigen wasn't.

Poor old Walt! Not two weeks ago, Nevada had told him she loathed him, that she would not marry him, and that she could never admire or even like a man who made such a slave of himself. And tonight she was treating him as if he were the most precious object on earth. He was flattered, but a little suspicious.

They were the first to forsake the glories of that mountain evening. Walt went to the shack where he would sleep, and Nevada went into the cook-shack where Maud was darning socks.

Once the door was closed behind her, the girl burst into tears—tears of rage and humiliation and real grief.



The party reached its height when

"Why did you let that little hussy stay here?" she wept.

"Because we need the forty a month."

Denied sympathy and understanding, the hysterical girl flung herself off to bed, and Horseface Maud sat darning, with a deep line between her black gimlet eyes.

She was, for some unaccountable reason, growing suspicious of Mrs. Holly. There was something about the blonde girl that struck a false note. Perhaps she was too flattering. Perhaps she was too smooth.

Horseface Maud, in spite of the crude conditions under which she had spent most of her life, knew smoothness—the kind of smoothness that conceals—when she saw it. She suspected that the blonde girl was artfully concealing something. It was hard to explain, harder still to put a finger on. But from then on, Horseface Maud kept a watchful eye on the pretty blonde.

Next day, in the prospect-hole, Tony and Nevada quarreled. It would be hard to say whether it was his joking references to her attitude toward Walt, or her snippy references to his attitude toward Mrs. Holly. At all events, Nevada threw down her pick and said she was through trying to help such a stupid, stubborn, conceited man—and left the hole.

The camp at once seemed to become demoralized. Nevada lavished her attentions on Walt, whose attitude was



the blonde girl did a dance she declared was the Dance of the Gold Rush.

that of a child whose fingers have been burnt and who dreads the flame. And he too seemed interested in the blonde girl. Every man in camp, indeed, seemed infatuated to a degree with Mrs. Holly.

And the camp was growing. Old-timers had heard rumors that Tony Billings had found gold, and prospectors were beginning to trickle in. In less than a week, six of them came in, pitched their tents and began to prospect the country. Evenings found the cook-shack crowded, with Mrs. Holly the center of attention —when she wasn't out taking walks with Tony.

A cattleman dropped in one night with a jug of corn whisky. Everyone got a little lively, including Maud and the blonde girl. It became a hilarious party, with everyone participating but Nevada, who hated corn liquor. The party reached its height when the blonde girl ran up to her shack, took a golden shawl from one of her suitcases, and in the light of the moon and a bonfire, did a dance which she declared was the Dance of the Gold Rush.

With everyone in camp as an audience, the small blonde girl danced about the fire, as graceful as the very flames, with the moonlight and the firelight striking silver and golden gleams and glints from her golden hair and her golden shawl. Her slim body was amazingly sinuous, and she made of the dance a dramatic thing, as she swooped here and there,

picking up stones, tossing them away, until she found one in which, with a sudden surge of rapture, an ecstatic whirling, she portrayed the finding of gold. She now showed, with fluid movements of arms and supple body, the digging for the lode, then the finding of the rich ore, and she then conveyed the growing and growing excitement of the rush, spinning about madly, dancing about the fire in a very frenzy.

FLUISHED, breathless, she threw herself down beside Tony, who for a moment was too astounded to join in the uproarious applause. Then he began to clap his hands too, and that left only Nevada, who did not applaud at all. Her face was white; she looked like a girl whose heart is utterly broken.

Horseface Maud had watched that dance with a shrewd and knowing eye. Her suspicions of Mrs. Holly had been growing. The dance sharpened them. She decided to talk it over with Tony as soon as there was a good opportunity. But—she waited too long.

Next morning Tony and Doris Holly went off on another picnic. It had developed that she was simply mad about picnics, and she somehow always managed it so that she and Tony went off on them alone. It sometimes took clever arranging, but she was equal to it....

The "accident" happened at noon at the cliff on the east side of Wheelbarrow

Peak, where they had climbed with their lunch—a five-mile hike from camp. They climbed to the top of the peak, rolled boulders down on the west side, then descended to a small bench which was actually the brow of a cliff with a sheer fall of about seventy feet. After their picnic lunch, the blonde girl suggested that they push more boulders off. She loved to see boulders go bounding down mountain-sides.

"I want to see that one go down," she said, and indicated a rock perched near the edge of the cliff, about four feet from a scraggly little mountain oak tree, which grew at the very edge of the slight slope where the cliff began.

The rock was almost square, and it must have weighed half a ton. Tony sat down and pushed at the boulder with both hands and feet. It moved. Grasping the trunk of the oak, the girl pushed at the rock with her feet. It gave still more.

With a final tremendous heave, Tony got it moving. The girl's feet slipped from the rock as it went. They became entangled with Tony's legs as he started to scramble up. The girl screamed. He lost his balance, then his footing. He fell. He struck the edge with one shoulder and—bounded off into space.

HORSEFACE MAUD was in the cook-shack when she heard loud, hysterical sobbing. She ran out and saw Mrs. Holly trudging shoeless up the cañon. The feet of her heavy woolen stockings were in shreds, and her small white feet were bruised and bleeding. For a moment she could not speak, she was so breathless from sobbing, so hysterical. Then she gasped: "Tony—Tony killed himself!"

Others had come running. Nevada and Walt had been panning some placer samples behind the cook-shack. Tellurium had been sharpening steel at the forge.

They gathered about the girl. They made her sit down. With tears blurring her eyes and staining her cheeks, she blurted out what had happened. They were having lunch, she said, on the cliff above Cliff Springs; after lunch they had started rolling boulders off, and Tony had slipped, got entangled with her legs, and fallen off the cliff.

"Is he dead?" Nevada screamed.

"I don't know!" the blonde girl sobbed.

"How come," Horseface Maud gruffly asked, "you're in your stockin' feet?"

"Oh, it was horrible!" Mrs. Holly answered. "After he fell, I slid down that sloping rock, to see if I could see him. I didn't realize how steep the slope is. When I was at the very edge, I realized I couldn't climb back. When I tried to crawl, I started sliding down. I tried crawling on my hands and knees. Finally, I took my shoes off, because I thought stocking feet would give me a better grip on the rock."

"What happened to your shoes?" Maud boomed.

"They went over the edge."

THE others had not waited to hear all of this. They were running toward Walt's truck—Walt and Nevada and Tellurium. Horseface Maud raced after them, leaving the hysterical blonde girl in camp.

They drove as close as they could to the foot of the cliff. The rest of the way they walked, a fearful little group, silent except for softly called questions and answers as they deployed.

None of them voiced the thought that it would be a difficult job to find Tony. The terrain at the foot of the cliff, all about the springs, was furrowed with small cañons and washes, and thick with scrub-oaks and piñons.

They spent an hour or more beating about among bushes, scrambling into and out of washes. Then suddenly Walt cried: "Here he is!"

The rancher had seen him—in the top branches of a tree. It was a tough little cedar tree. Horseface and Walt climbed the tree and lifted him down. He was unconscious. But he was not dead. The tough springiness of the branches had cushioned his fall and miraculously saved his life.

He was badly scratched here and there, especially about the chest and arms. But he wasn't dead. And it appeared presently that he was not even badly hurt.

He opened his eyes and saw them all crouching about him. Nevada might have enfolded him in her aching arms the moment he opened his eyes, if his first words hadn't been, "Where—where's Doris?"

"Back in camp," Horseface Maud answered. "She's all right."

Walt brought him water from the spring in the tin can always kept there. Tellurium lifted him into a sitting position, and he drank. He was weak, but he said he felt all right. Miraculously,

no bones had been broken, and he had apparently suffered no internal injuries. "You better not talk," Horseface Maud said.

"I feel all right," Tony answered. "Kind of shaken-up and achy, but otherwise O.K."

"How did it happen?" Mrs. Tackaberry was curious to know.

"We were rolling off boulders. There was one near the edge—a big one. We both pushed. It started to go, and I slipped and got tangled up with Doris' feet. That's about all I remember, except falling."

She accompanied them as far as the truck, where they half-carried Tony, over his protests. When he was comfortable in the bed of the truck, Horseface told the rest of them she wanted to talk to Tony privately. And when the others had withdrawn, she said:

"Now, look here, son: this is mighty serious. Do you think that girl did that deliberately, or don't you?"

His somewhat dazed eyes cleared. He said indignantly, "I don't see how you can even suggest such a thing."

"Mebbe you're forgetting what happened here just a couple o' weeks ago, Tony. Don't forget that when you go back to Michigan, you're gonna testify against that bunch o' political crooks who sent Beefsteak Harry Hickman out here to kill you. If you go back alive, you're gonna testify them straight into prison. You know that. And you know how dangerous they are. Beefsteak Harry Hickman muffed the job. Sure! He's servin' time for cattle-stealin', 'cause we tricked him into killin' a range cow. But what makes you think those crooks wouldn't try to kill you some other way?"

DORIS isn't one of that gang," the young man protested.

"Are you dead sure you never saw her before—back in Michigan?"

"I'm positive."

"Are you dead sure you've never heard of any of those six crooks back there bein' stuck on a blonde cabaret dancer?"

"No! And what makes you say Doris is a cabaret dancer?"

"Because I've known cabaret dancers. She's too slick. How do you know she isn't Beefsteak Harry's sweetie? How do you know what or who she is? She claims to be in Nevada for a divorce. How do you know she's here for a divorce? Anybody can say they're here for a divorce. I think she's a phony.

From the day she began makin' such a play for you, I've thought she was phony. What happened today proves it."

Tony Billings shook his head. "Maud, you're wrong."

"Tony," she said, "you're in love with that blonde."

"No," Tony denied. "I'm not in love with her."

Nevada, Walt and Tellurium, gathered some distance away, grew impatient. Nevada called: "Mom! What is it?"

"Nothing," she answered. "Take Tony back to camp. I've got some prowlin' around to do."

She took a coil of light rope out of the truck.

When they were gone, Maud climbed to the brow of the cliff, made one end of the rope fast to the trunk of a scrub oak, and eased herself down the slope of rock on which Doris Holly had said she had slid, and from which, to save herself, she claimed to have thrown her shoes, then crawled to safety in her stocking feet.

IN that smooth expanse of rock were fresh scratches which, to a wilderness woman like Maud Tackaberry, told an eloquent story. She got down on hands and knees, she even used her prospector's glass, to read this story. She saw where the boulder had gone off. She saw where Tony had fallen and bounded off. She saw where Doris had clung to the tree. But there were no scratches or marks on the rock to uphold the blonde's statement that she had almost slid off into space herself, and had saved herself only by kicking off her shoes and getting a grip on the sloping rock with her stocking feet.

Horseface could not prove what she knew in court. She could not prove it to Tony, because Tony was still a greenhorn and would not be able to see what an experienced Westerner like Maud Tackaberry could see. She must use drastic methods. . . .

She came into camp about two hours later with a glint in her black gimlet eyes. Everyone in camp was sitting under the canvas awning on the shady side of the cook-shack. Doris Holly was sitting beside Tony on a bench, and she looked big-eyed and forlorn. Tony was apparently recovering nicely from his fall. Nevada and Walt were on the ground near by, and Tellurium was sitting, Western-fashion, on one heel, while he drew aimless little diagrams in the dust with a twig.

Three old prospectors were sitting on the running-board of Walt's truck. Everyone was listening to the blonde girl. In a choked little voice, she was telling again about her close escape at the top of the cliff.

HORSEFACE MAUD went inside, **H**on into the room she shared with Tellurium. She pulled a flat trunk out from under her bed, opened it and rummaged around in it until she found a wired-together bundle of four gilded copper tubes a quarter-inch thick and a foot long, with notched ends. She removed the wire and returned through the kitchen to where the group sat in the shade.

Mrs. Holly had stopped talking. One of the prospectors, old Misery Bill, was telling a detailed story of his pal's death—how his pal had fallen down a mine-shaft.

Horseface Maud took up a position near the group, holding the four gilded copper tubes in one hand, softly rattling them. This sound presently attracted attention.

Misery Bill stopped talking and said: "What you got there, Maud?"

"A doodle-bug."

Tony laughed and said: "A what?"

"A doodle-bug."

"It's a gold-mine indicator," Tellurium explained.

"How does it work?"

"It takes two people," Horseface Maud answered. "They face each other a couple o' feet apart. Then each of 'em takes a tube in each hand, and they let the notches sort of fit together to form a kind of a framework. The tubes are filled with chemicals and rare metals, and these chemicals are supposed to get excited if there's any gold anywhere around. These here set Tellurium bck twenty-five bucks. They're supposed to smell out gold as far away as four miles—it's a real powerful doodle-bug."

"But how does it work?" Tony asked.

"Well, the two people workin' it hold up the four tubes in that little sort of framework shape—holdin' 'em very lightly. And the way the framework falls tells you where to go to look for the gold. If they fall straight down, you dig there. But if they fall to the right or to the left, you follow the direction and keep followin' it until they tell you to dig straight down."

Nevada said: "Mom, you always said they were a joke. You said Tellurium was a sucker to pay all that money."

"I had a dream last night," Maud answered. "I've got a kind of a hunch. I want to check up on it. Tony, do you feel strong enough to work the bug with me?"

The tall young man from Michigan got up. "Sure," he said. He accepted a pair of the gilded tubes and held them as she directed. He hooked the notched end of each into the notch in the end of each of hers. The framework of tubes collapsed in a down-cañon direction. (It



They spent an hour or more scrambling into and out of washes. Then suddenly Walt cried: "Here he is!"

had taken every little influence on Maud's part to make them fall in that direction.)

They went down-cañon a hundred feet, and tried the doodle-bug again. Again it collapsed in a down-cañon direction. Everyone had followed them, and was making suggestions, some serious and some frivolous.

The doodle-bug continued to fall, each time it was tried, pointing down-cañon until they reached the beginning of the Cliff Springs Trail—the trail which Tony and Mrs. Holly had taken to the cliff, and down which Mrs. Holly had returned alone, followed later by Maud.

The doodle-bug indicated the trail, and they followed it for perhaps five hundred feet. And here, suddenly, the doodle-bug indicated a direction away from the trail.

Maud said: "O.K., son. Go ahead. Go in that direction for about a hundred feet, and we'll try her again."

Tony started off ahead. He walked about fifty feet. He suddenly stopped and shouted: "Whose shoes are these?"

But he knew before he picked them up—a pair of small, stout brown walking shoes. No one in camp but Mrs. Holly had had shoes like them.

Nevada and the blonde girl ran almost side by side to where Tony had picked up the shoes from behind a clump of buckbrush. Mrs. Holly momentarily lost her assurance. Her face was a quick flash of white. It was the first time Maud had seen her lose even a vestige of her composure. But she quickly regained it.

"That's funny," she said, and darted a quick look at Mrs. Tackaberry, whose gimlet eyes were fixed on her relentlessly.

"Yeah," Maud drawled. "It's sort o' queer, aint it?"

Nevada cried: "But she said she threw her shoes off the cliff!"

"Mebbe," Horseface snapped, "she was lyin'."

Various interesting expressions were following one another across Tony's face. Foremost was doubt. His boyish-looking, darkly tanned face was quite pale; and his eyes as he looked at the blonde girl were bleak.

IT was quite obvious what was going through his mind. Doubts and suspicions—almost certainties. Why had she lied about kicking her shoes over the cliff?

And in that dangerous moment Doris Holly proved that she was equal to any occasion that might arise.



With a sob, she stumbled to Tony and threw her arms about his neck. "Oh, darling!" she sobbed. "I lied to you! I was so terrified! When you fell over the cliff, I was so horrified that for a moment I almost threw myself off after you. You—you see, darling, I'd jumped back and—and—"

Sobs checked her for a moment.

"I—I don't know how I got here—everything was so confused and horrible. Then I felt—just terrible, that it had happened to you and not to me too; because if you died, I wanted to die. I was such a coward, Tony! I—I took off my shoes and threw them behind that bush, and told that story to make people think I wasn't such a coward!"

There was a queer look on Tony's face. He was almost smiling.

The blonde girl removed her arms from about his neck, stepped back and whimpered: "Tony! Tony! Don't you believe me?"

"Why should he?" Horseface Maud coldly inquired. "He knows you're a liar. If you weren't before, you certainly are now. I put those shoes here myself. I picked 'em up at the bottom o' the cliff and carried 'em right there. You could have seen my tracks there, if you'd looked."

Mrs. Holly seemed not to hear her. Staring at Tony, she said: "Tony! You do believe me, don't you?"

Tony's eyes had a strange gleam to them. The corners of his mouth twitched a little.

"Sure I do, Doris," he answered softly. "I believe in Santa Claus. I believe the moon is made of green cheese. I personally know the cow that jumped over the moon. And I believe you didn't intend to kick me off that cliff."

White-faced with fury, Mrs. Holly whirled around. But before she could speak, Mrs. Tackaberry drawled: "You can say it when we're alone. Come on. I want a talk with you."

She would say nothing until she and the blonde girl were alone in the latter's shack. Then Horseface said: "Git busy and pack. Walt'll take you back to Las Vegas. . . . Now, look here: When I git through, you can say all you want, but I aint through.

"What I've got to say is this: I know you aint on the level. I think you're Beefsteak Harry's girl friend. I aint sure, and I don't care. A few days ago, when Jake Breen went to town, I had him take a letter to the warden of the State prison at Carson City, askin' him to send me every photograph Beefsteak Harry has got pasted up in his cell. I'm just willin' to bet my bottom dollar that your photograph is goin' to be in that collection. Do you want to stick around and find out?"

The girl did not answer; she was busily packing.

"It's lucky for you you didn't kill that boy," Horseface Maud added. "Now—go ahead and look me in the eye, and say what you want."

The blonde girl did not look up. She said nothing. Within half an hour Walt Jernigen—always so willing to please anyone—was starting on the long hot drive through the desert wilderness to civilization; and the blonde girl, white-faced and silent, sat beside him. . . .

The supper that shortly followed their departure was a quiet and uncomfortable meal.

After it was over, Horseface Maud found the opportunity to say, in private, to her daughter: "Hon, now that that buroxide blonde is gone, things ought to be a whole lot easier for you and Tony. If you want my advice—"

"Thanks, Mom," Nevada said. "I don't need any advice. Tony and I are going for a walk as soon as the moon comes up."

Another lively episode in the quaint career of Horseface Maud will be described in an early issue.



CAPTAIN BEN STRIKE cursed the dark river. For five consecutive nights he had struggled against the current. During the day he pulled his flat-bottomed boat into the reeds on the bank and rested.

Now, on the sixth night from Koulikoro, just as he was about to congratulate himself on his progress, disaster overtook him. The flat-bottomed boat was caught in a wild race of the river, whirled around at terrific speed and sucked under.

Captain Strike's thoughts, as he found himself in the water, were of caimans. The Niger shelters fine specimens of the loathsome brutes. He recalled stories of their ways. The caiman abhors fresh meat, and has a habit of sitting on a capture for eight days till it reaches the state of decomposition that makes it choice eating.

The recollection of this anecdote made Captain Strike flail the dark water with unusual vigor. It was after midnight; the thick African night made the banks invisible. He swam blindly, fighting the current.

His feet touched bottom. . . . He was on dry land, but unfortunately, the strip

Thousand Eyes of Fire

The story of a great treasure, and of the many men driven desperate by its fascination.

By JAMES
FRANCIS DWYER

Illustrated by John Clymer

was small. He moved forward ten feet and found himself again in the water. He retreated swiftly, his lips blaspheming. Warily he moved in a circle; he discovered that he was on a small sandbank in the middle of the river.

The caimans decided his actions. He would wait till morning, when a native boat would surely come along and rescue him. The publicity of the rescue was annoying. Captain Strike's movements were secret. He was on the trail of something extraordinary—something that had brought madness and death to scores of men who had hunted it in the jungle stretches between the Zambesi and the Rio de Oro. The captain was searching for the "Thousand Eyes of Fire."

THE mosquitoes made sleep impossible. Strike scooped out a hole in the sand the length of his body, covered himself till only his mouth, nose and eyes were exposed; but the insects did not allow him to doze. He lay awake and thought over the innumerable stories that he had listened to during the three years he had spent in search of the treasure.

Lush, glamorous stories: tales built up of fat colorful words that had an opalescent charm and that ran from the lips like notes of music—plaited like verbal gold around the "Thousand Eyes of Fire."

The tales were Strike's litany. At times he chanted them aloud. They made stanzas of flame. Deftly he fitted one into



the other, so that it was a vast saga that churned within his brain, the Saga of the Thousand Eyes.

It began with "Devil" De Boos. Devil indeed! Strength of eight men, they said. Devil De Boos down on the dark Zambesi. Fought a gorilla with his bare hands and won the battle. Captain Ben Strike thrilled when he pictured De Boos. He felt a kinship toward him. The world, so Strike thought, was filled with a lot of gutless shrimps under the yoke of a million laws.

Devil De Boos had, by violence, robbery and murder, gathered together the greatest cache of precious stones that had ever been collected. Gems of extraordinary beauty found their way into the great pouch made out of the hide of the white oryx on which he slept. Stones that were the grand courtesans of their class, glittering soulless things for which men had braved hunger and thirst and death.

The natives whispered of the Thousand Eyes of Fire. The whisper went abroad through the jungle. Hot tongues slobbered over it—made the gems larger, more brilliant, more numerous. Possibly the treasure desired a new master. The

Thousand Eyes might have tired of being a mattress for the heavy body of De Boos.

The whispers came to São Paula de Luanda. They rolled into the big ears of a cross-breed as strong as Devil De Boos. Six feet seven in his bare feet! He was known as the Thumbless One. He wore an armlet of polished stone on his upper arm, and he had a habit of crushing the head of an adversary upon this stone armlet. Devil De Boos was found with his skull fractured—and the Thousand Eyes of Fire, in the pouch made from the hide of the white oryx, had left home.

CAPTAIN STRIKE, fighting mosquito-toes, pictured the Thumbless One on the run—northward. Strike knew that the murderer ran northward. He had checked his journey. Strike had a flair for topography.

The Thumbless One and the pouch moved through jungle tracks, dark, moist, leech-ridden: the hinterland of Angola. Skirting native villages, living on stolen maize and nuts, but happy in the possession of the Thousand Eyes....

Strike, in fancy, saw the Thumbless One looking fearfully at the gems: caressing them with torn and bloody fingers, thrusting them against his sweaty face, kissing them, licking them, rolling them against his big thick tongue to increase their dazzling fire.

Strike was thrilled at the picture of the fellow. He wondered what the undeveloped brain of the Thumbless One thought he could purchase with the gems. Women, food, drink—but how make the exchange?

Strike fought an aggressive mosquito and spoke aloud. "The silly swine!" he growled. "You can't swap things like them unless you have brains."

On and on ran the Thumbless One, the stones fighting with each other for the rare sunbeams when he opened the pouch: vermillion, saffron, lavender, sea-green, cerulean, blinding white—consuming the soul of the poor devil that carried them, making him mad.

In the wild Quilengues district that is the lion-hunter's paradise, the Thumbless One tried to steal a bag of kous-kous from a hut in a little village. It was night, and unfortunately for the thief, the owner of the hut had been visited the previous evening by a lion that had carried away a milch goat. The goat-owner thought the lion might return for

another; so when he heard the Thumbless One in the bushes, he drove his spear forward with all his force. The spear skewered the Thumbless One to a baobab tree.... The saga was fattening.

Drums beating in the thick night. Beehive huts vomiting men, women and children. The Thumbless One pinned like a beetle to the tree, the chief of the village thrusting his hands into the pouch and making sounds of wonder. Again in fancy Captain Strike saw them. "The poor mutts!" he murmured. "The poor silly saps!"

The chief appropriated the treasure. He didn't know its value. He and his people had a belief that the jewels were the eyes of gods. In the nights they spread the gems out on mats of woven fiber and made obeisance to them.

The picture of the worshiping natives floated before the eyes of Captain Ben Strike. He saw them crouched on their haunches staring at the glittering jewels, making offerings to them: blood of white roosters, baked meats, speckled grains of maize. He grinned as he slashed at the tormenting mosquitoes.

Strike had checked the tragedy that came to that village. A terrible tragedy! Black even for Africa, where the blackest tragedies have their being.

A youth from the village, acting as a bearer to a lion-hunter, journeyed down to the coast. Like all out-back folk, he bragged of the possessions of his village. He told of the Thousand Eyes, and how his people thought them alive. He didn't, because he had seen an "eye" on the finger of the big *baas* who employed him—a white "eye" that flashed....

Four desperate white men of Matadi listened to the youth's bragging. The four started for the village. The eye on the finger of the lion-hunter was a diamond of the first caliber!

THE four were weeks on trek. They fought their way through virgin forests, combated wild animals and serpents, suffered thirst, hunger and malaria; but they never thought of turning back. The Thousand Eyes were to them what the pillar of fire and the cloud were to the Israelites in the desert.

They entered the village in the night while the people slept. They attacked the hut of the chief, holding off the villagers while they tried to find where the gems were hidden. Their rifles were busy while they searched.

The chief was old but brave. They

toasted his toes, but his courage did not falter. His gods had sent the bag of glittering things, and they could burn him alive before he would tell of the hiding-place.

The four tried the torture on the chief's favorite wife. Her screams were deafening. The chief told. The jewels were in the hollow of a dûm palm at the back of the council house.

The four found the pouch; then, angry with the stubborn old warrior and his people, they shot up the village. Men, women and children fell before the rifles of the quartet. They set fire to the miserable huts and departed with the treasure. . . .

One man of the murderous four reached the coast. He entered Matadi late on a summer evening. He was staggering, chanting an obscene song; and he carried a pouch made of the skin of the white oryx.

This man turned into a lane near the native market. In that same lane he was found on the following morning, his throat sliced from ear to ear; but the pouch and its contents had disappeared.

HERE was a gap in the story—a gap that Captain Ben Strike had been unable to bridge. The Thousand Eyes, said gossip, had gone inland—speeding up the Congo to swing northward to the Cameroons. A million tongues wagged; the jungles breathed of the treasure; the white desert sands whispered of it in the nights.

There were liars who swore that they had seen the Eyes of Fire. Hefty liars. Captain Strike had interviewed dozens of them during his years of search. He found that they were suffering from delusions.

Then, when the curtain of despair had fallen on his mind, Strike heard a story that seemed to stand upon the props of truth. He tested part of it with records, and it stood the strain. During the uprising of the Tuaregs against the French in 1917, a small raiding-party of the People of the Veil had fallen upon five Frenchmen in the desert north of Bamako.

The five French made a stout resistance. They held off the desert raiders for three days, killing six of them; but on the fourth day they were overwhelmed and murdered. The Tuaregs acquired something so great that there were whisperings in the Palais d'Orsay three thousand miles to the north. The five



The Thumbless One had a habit of crushing the head of an adversary upon his armlet of stone.

Frenchmen had been on a secret mission: a very secret mission. They carried "something" which would have greatly fattened the French exchequer, sadly depleted by the Great War.

There were excited messages between Paris and the French Sudan. The French Camel Corps, the *méharistes*, went into action. It pursued the raiders, came up with them and captured them after a brief engagement. But the "something" was not in the hands of the brigands. It had been disposed of during their flight, and all efforts to wring from the prisoners information concerning the hiding-place were fruitless. The "something" that had stirred Paris was lost in the Big Sands. . . .

It was this story that had brought Captain Ben Strike along the Niger from Koulikoro. Strike had listened to faint whisperings. He felt that the three-year search was near the end. He was, to use a childish phrase, "hot." As he fought the mosquitoes, he was filled with a strange belief: a belief that the Thousand Eyes of Fire were calling to him; calling to him, the faithful searcher, who wished to do worship before them. . . .

The morning light showed the bank



of the river a bare fifty yards from the sand-bank, and close to the water was a small Tuareg encampment. There were three tents, half a dozen goats and four hobbled camels.

Captain Strike cupped his hands and hailed the camp. An elderly female came from a tent, regarded him for a few moments, then retired.

Strike waited. A younger woman peeped from the tent, showed evident amusement at his discomfiture, then disappeared from view. The Captain was annoyed. He shouted at the top of his lungs. He wondered why no men showed themselves. He guessed the males were away.

The old woman appeared again. She came slowly toward the bank. Strike addressed her in the Temajegh, which is the tongue of the Tuareg. He promised a gift if she could find a flat-bottomed punt that would get him ashore. When she looked undecided, he doubled the price.

The crone returned to the camp and talked with two other women and a young girl. They were evidently nervous. The promised gift intrigued them, but the absence of their own men made

them fearful of offering help to the man marooned on the sand-bank.

Avarice won the day. The four came down to the bank and dragged from the rushes a flat-bottomed boat in the last stages of usefulness. The crone, possibly because her life was less precious than that of the others, was pushed into the affair, and with great difficulty she made the sand-bank.

CAPTAIN STRIKE took charge on the return trip. The treasure-hunter was a vigorous man; he stood well over six feet and he had a quality of liteness that caused one to think he was always on the point of making a quick pounce upon something or other that was invisible to the observer. Perhaps the long hunt for the Thousand Eyes of Fire had produced a sort of predatory expectancy in his manner.

Strike leaped to the shore, gallantly helped the crone to the muddy bank, paid the promised reward, and took a quick glance at the other two women and the young girl who were silently watching.

The keen hawk-eyes of Strike passed over the two women. They slipped less swiftly over the face of the girl; then, with a suddenness that had the quality of a scream, they rested on her shapely right forearm—stopped and feasted on what they saw.

A flame blazed in the brain of Captain Strike—a flame that coursed through his body, a flame that lifted him up and swung him into a world of dreams. His cunning warned him, begged him to tear his eyes away from what he saw, but he was powerless. Strike was staring at *proof!* *Proof of the million whispers!* *Proof of the gossip that had been tongue-polished over the years!* On the forearm of the girl was a glaucous splash, a blaze of gorgeous green, a gem of unbelievable size that threw back the white rays of the morning sun in blinding viridescent flashes. Strike was looking at one of the Thousand Eyes that had become famous! That had lifted itself above its companions: "*L'Oeil Vert!*"

LATER, hours later, he tried to reconstruct his landing—to recall what he had done, what he had said after he had caught a glimpse of the great emerald. He couldn't remember. He wondered if the women had seen the flame of covetousness that must surely have appeared on his lean sun-tanned face.

Were they suspicious, afraid of his presence, hopeful that he would go away and leave them in peace?

He had bought from the crone a mess of ground millet and water. He sat in the sunshine some twenty yards from the tents and ate. He had a dim idea that he had been stricken with some queer kind of malaria, but on making a close survey of the feverish symptoms, he came to the conclusion that he was drunk. Drunk with joy.

He took the pottery vessel that contained the kous-kous back to the tents. He handed it to the girl. "*L'Oeil Vert*" was missing from her forearm. They had evidently noticed the hunger of his eyes.

Captain Strike held the girl in conversation. She was a comely person of nineteen years, bashful, but at the same time pleased at the evident interest shown by the white man. The crone and the two other women came forward to break the conversational grip. Strike was not a person to be pushed away from his prey. In her own tongue he told the girl that she was beautiful. The Temajegh language permitted him to say this in a flowery and ornate manner. He said that she was like a glimpse of an oasis in the desert, akin to a spring of clear water in the Grand Erg. The three women frowned; the girl blushed.

THE crone showed curiosity as to his movements. Strike lied. He said a friend was coming down the river from Koulikoro; he would wait there till the friend arrived. In turn he questioned the crone. Where were the men of the camp? She answered him snappishly. They had gone into the desert. For how long? She didn't know.

Strike went back to his position on the bank. Well, he had planted something in the mind of the girl. The business would be slow, perhaps, but he had been three years on the hunt. If the men returned he would be chased away; fervently he prayed that they would remain absent.

He hailed a small trading-boat going up the river. He made a pretense of sending a message to Koulikoro. He bought some provisions from the Arab boat-owner, bargained for the loan of a small tarpaulin that he deftly turned into a tent, and purchased a string of brilliant beads for the girl. He sent the trader to the camp with the gift. The girl was his prey. He had to find a way

into her good graces. He thought she had shown pleasure at his flattery.

Late in the afternoon the girl came out to milk the goats. Captain Strike was alert. He strolled over to keep her company. Timidly she thanked him for the gift.

Again in the flowery Temajegh tongue he told her that the beads were a poor thing in comparison to the neck that he bought them to adorn. She simpered. On her knees beside the goat she looked up at him with admiring eyes.

In the course of Captain Strike's travails, many women had found him attractive. He had the air of a man who might be chosen to carry the golden sword of Dame Adventure.

The crone came forward hurriedly. She was evidently suspicious of Strike. She showed annoyance. Strike begged her to sell him some goat's milk. While she rushed back to the tent for a vessel, he took a chance. Would the girl come out of her tent when the other women retired? With assumed passion he begged her to. He had something to say to her, something important. He had never seen anyone as beautiful. Never, never! He knew that the attempt was brash and inartistic, but he could not afford to lose time.

The girl did not answer. The crone came back with a vessel for the milk. Strike paid for it and walked back to his makeshift tent. He built a fire as the night came down.

After eating, he sat and stared at the tents. He fixed his thoughts on the girl. He would drag her out into the night by sheer longing. He made of his desire an invisible lasso that he sent seeking her. She would feel that he was willing her to come.

It was silent there by the river—silent except for the buzz of countless millions of mosquitoes that Strike kept at bay by sitting within the smoke of the fire. The tents were in darkness. Occasionally a camel grunted.

HER coming was so silent that Strike, intent on bringing her, was startled when she appeared before him. For an instant he wondered if his longing had made a fool of him; then, with a cry of delight, he reached out and touched her gown. The gods were working for Captain Strike.

Fearfully timorous was the girl: afraid that her absence might be noticed by the three women; afraid of Strike, yet

thrilled and fascinated by his manner, by his interest in her.

No amateur with the fair sex was Captain Ben Strike. He had devoted a lot of time to the study of women; and now by the side of the dark sluggish Niger he blessed the efforts he had made to understand the feminine mind. The girl who had crept out to speak to him was a human key to the treasure that he sought. He felt certain that she was. Some wild thought had sprung up within his mind telling him that he would reach the Thousand Eyes of Fire through her. A queer compelling thought that adjured him to be careful in his handling of her, to soothe her fears, to use the greatest care in seeking information.

It was the reverse of the sheik and the romantic white girl. Here was the white man and the child of the desert. Captain Strike, quite as romantic and quite as skilled in love-making as any desert rover, the girl beautiful as an Occidental maiden and just as willing to be courted.

Captain Ben Strike worked with immense cunning. There was such a lot to tell her: Matters fabulous—of glittering cities, of seas and ships, of palaces of marble that ran up to the stars, of food and wine and fair women.

"But none as beautiful as you," he whispered. "Not one."

The night rolled on—Strike whispering, weaving cunning bits of flattery, choking the mad desire to question her regarding the green flame that had flashed from her forearm as he stepped from the boat. He had great difficulty in keeping his curiosity in check, but he was afraid of startling her. He must convince her that it was she and not the treasure that interested him.

He spoke of New York, of London, of Paris. He painted pictures. He flung up on the black wall of night visions that her eyes saw. Never had his words been so colored, so seductive. They had an hypnotic effect upon the girl . . . Captain Strike took her hands in his; he stroked her face; he kissed her. It was a place of dark magic. When she crept back to the tents, Strike told himself that he was content with the approach he had made.

ON the morning following the crone made definite objections to Strike's presence. She asked him to move on. She was angry and uttered threats. She informed him that the men of the camp would arrive on the following day, and

if Strike was still there it might be unhealthy for him. Captain Strike grinned. He had a belief he would not be there when the Tuaregs returned from their thieving expedition. The strange feeling that he was close to the Thousand Eyes of fire clutched him that morning.

FOUR times during the day Captain Strike spoke to the girl, rousing the temper of the three women by doing so. This was part of his plan. The three women openly abused the girl, and the girl became rebellious. It was the situation that Strike desired. He encouraged the girl by words and gestures. Her revolt would make his work easier when the night fell.

He wondered if the girl knew of the Thousand Eyes. Perhaps the enormous emerald that he had glimpsed was the only part of the treasure that she had seen. Then why the feeling that possessed him, the feeling that he had come to the end of the hunt? No, she knew!

She came to him in a rage, a rage against the three women. She was indignant. Why should they control her? She would leave the camp if they continued their attacks on her liberty.

Cunningly, cleverly, Captain Strike supported her. She was talkative. She threatened the three. She, the girl, knew things, lots of things. Strike pounced upon every word she uttered. Cautiously he put forward feelers. Why should the three be afraid of the girl? Breathless, he awaited her answer. He was holding her in his arms now, holding her tight.

She became emotional. She sobbed; he kissed her tears away; he soothed her. Of course, if she knew things, they, the women, were foolish to fight with her. But were the things she knew important enough? Were they?

He strained his ears. She was whispering to him. Was he mad? No, no, he was sane, quite sane. She had used the Temajegh word for treasure. *For treasure!*

"What treasure?" he gasped.

"The great treasure," she whispered. "The Eyes that Spur Fire."

Captain Strike, blood pounding through his head, held the girl close to his breast. He kept a grip on his tongue; he throttled a score of questions that craved utterance. He wondered whether the wild pounding of his heart would startle her. He stroked her black hair; he kissed her with finely assumed affection. Now was the great moment to exercise skill. To

use the spur of silence while exhibiting affection. Cleverly he showed by a half-uttered word and a laugh that he doubted her assertion. It was no business of his, but wasn't she—wasn't she romancing?

He doubted her? She pushed her palms against his breast and sat erect. Didn't he believe that she knew the hiding-place of "the Eyes"? She did! She did! She could prove it! She thought that if he loved her—if he loved her that she—She broke off, sobbing.

Strike, mad with cupidity, kissed her and murmured words into her ears. He loved her more than his life, he asserted. He adored her; he couldn't live without her. If he could take her away? Away to the coast—to Dakar or Conakry where they could find a big ship going northward to the great cities of light that he had spoken of. *If—*

She blazed again. They could! They could! "The Eyes that Spurt Fire" would provide the means! She knew where they were hidden! She had seen the spot. Her father, killed in a raid in the Hoggar, had shown it to her. Told her that part of it belonged to her—the greater part.

"Where is it?" whispered Strike. "Where?" His lips and throat were ash-dry as he put the question.

The girl waved her hand in the direction of the dark desert running northward. "Eleven hours' camel riding," she answered. "It is hidden in the Wells of Kel-Efudar."

Captain Strike, curiosity for the moment appeased, became the ardent wooer. He brought up the heavy artillery of love-making. He attacked vigorously. If her words were true—They were? Then—then, before them was a shining road. A road to happiness that she had never dreamed of, to delights that were greater than Allah had promised to his faithful.

IT was some hours before the dawn when Captain Strike, moving with the caution of an Indian, took the hobbles from two of the camels, saddled them, hoisted the girl upon one, mounted the other and swung their heads toward the desert. Strike was beside himself. Once, to his great astonishment, he found that he was sobbing. It had been a hard search for the Thousand Eyes of Fire. Now, in fancy, he saw them out in the wastes, signaling to him, their colored eyes blinking in the terrifying African night....



Desert-born, the girl took the route with assurance. She steered by the Great Bear, which in the Tuareg tongue is called "Talimt." The camels were strong beasts in good condition. They ate up the miles of sandy desert.

In the morning light the wastes stretched before them. A gray plateau of sand broken only by scattered patches of camel thorn and an occasional boulder. Strike looked at the girl. She smiled at him encouragingly. He was convinced that she knew the route. An intense fever of expectation clutched him....

It was three in the afternoon when the girl raised her right arm and pointed ahead. A ridge of red rock rose out of the sand, and Captain Strike understood from the gesture of his companion that beside the ridge were the Wells of Kel-Efudar. His head throbbed mightily. He wondered if the girl was sane. Did she really know of the hiding-place?

They halted in the shadow of the rocks. Immediately before them was a huge fissure in the stony ground, and the lip of this great crevice had been scored by the ropes of nomads who had drawn water from the depths during the

long centuries. Far down, away from the blistering Saharan sun, lay the water.

Strike looked into the enormous crack. Dark were the depths. Dark and terrifying. He turned on the girl.

"There is a way down!" she cried. "Come, I will show you."

He followed her through a low tunnel in the face of the rock. She dropped on her hands and knees; he followed her example. The gloom hid her. He heard only the swish of her garments somewhere ahead.

She halted and spoke. Strike took matches from his pocket and made a light. The girl had paused on the brink of a rough stairway that led down into the bowels of the earth. In a whisper she explained. This was a primitive stair to the water, and at a point halfway down, the treasure was hidden. She slipped over the edge and dropped to the first step, which was hardly visible.

TO Strike, who seldom knew fear, the descent into the abyss was a bit startling. There was a greasy slime upon the rocky stairway, and the steps themselves were so far apart that he had to lower himself, baby fashion, from one to the other, face to the rock and back to the depths.

The girl was in the lead. Strike found it difficult to keep up with her. She possessed a dexterity that was more serviceable at the moment than his superior strength. Out of the darkness her voice came up to him, warning him of spots that were a little more dangerous than others.

He cursed softly as he followed her. He wished that he had taken off his boots before tackling the descent. The greasy stones played tricks with his boots. They slid from under him when he attempted to stand upright without having a hand-hold on the rocks. And those rocks that he clawed at held unseen dangers. Once his clutching fingers touched something that was colder and more slimy than the stones themselves. He smothered a yelp of fear. He knew that he had touched a yellow-crested viper, the deadliest thing in all Africa. For an instant he had a desire to forget the treasure and scamper up to the clean sands far above him. For an instant only.

Below were the Thousand Eyes of Fire—the Eyes that he had sought

through weary years, the Eyes for which he had dared torture and illness and death itself. He controlled the horror that had come over him at the touch of the snake and slipped down to the next ledge.

Out of the darkness came the voice of the girl. She told him that she had arrived at the shelf of rock of which she had spoken. His head, so he thought, became immense as he heard her words. Immense and feverish. He begged her to repeat herself. He paused in the descent and listened. Some one was laughing like a maniac. Astonished, he found that it was himself! He was laughing aloud! He had a fear of madness. Again he tried to control himself when she inquired as to the cause of his wild laughter. He damned her coolness. Natives, he told himself, were like that, they lacked the emotional force of whites.

A little reckless over the last few steps. The black depths were plucking at his shoulder-blades, but the Eyes were close. Their nearness fought the fear. In fancy he saw them below him: winking in the black murk of the place, winking like a miniature Milky Way of colored fire. He called out to her to wait. Breathlessly he dropped on to the ledge beside her. She steadied him with a strong arm.

He screamed the question. Quietly she explained. The treasure was thrust into a hole in the face of the wall. She had seen her uncle take the bag from the hole. A light was wanted now.

The Captain used one of the precious matches. Ah, there was the hole! The girl stooped, pulled up the loose sleeve of her gown and thrust her shapely arm into the circular opening.

STRIKE heard the snap of steel in the silence—heard it as he stood at her side. The match burned his fingers, but he felt no pain. That snarl of springing steel had made him oblivious to pain. From his lips poured a string of curses. He knew! The devils! The dark-skinned devils! They wouldn't leave a treasure unguarded! With fiendish cunning they had built an iron handcuff into the opening, and the thing had snapped on the arm of the girl!

She was dreadfully calm at that moment. In a voice hardly more than a whisper, she spoke. She told him how she had blundered. She remembered how her uncle had fixed something be-

fore he had put his arm into the hole. Something that had evidently put the handcuff out of action. She had forgotten.

Captain Strike knelt beside her. He clutched her arm and pulled. It was useless. He hurled questions at her. She answered in the same quiet, inhumanly calm manner.

From the sensation she thought that a band of cold iron had closed around her forearm. No, she was not in pain. It had closed softly but surely on her. There was no hope of pulling her arm away.

Strike was beside himself now. He unloosed a continuous stream of foul curses. He had no thought for the girl, none at all. All his sympathy was showered upon himself. The devils had tricked him. After all his efforts, all his toil and labor, the thing was beyond his reach!

HE lit another match. He bent and eyed the hole in which the arm of the girl was pushed up to the shoulder. Roughly he thrust himself against her, oblivious of the closeness of her form as he stared at the opening.

A sudden glimmer of hope came to him. The hole had been fashioned for the arm of a warrior; therefore there was space around the slight limb of the girl. Space enough for her other arm to go a-searching. Now that the trap had been sprung, there was no further danger. The fools had overreached themselves. They had never thought that the slim arm of a girl would spring the invisible handcuff!

With horrible hurry he explained his thoughts. If she put her left arm into the hole she might touch the bag! There was room! There was no danger. He cursed her evident timidity. How could there be danger? In his excitement he caught her roughly by the shoulder and shook her. "Try!" he screamed. "Try!"

In silence she obeyed him. In the darkness his fingers felt her left arm slipping into the hole beside the imprisoned right. There was a momentary halt as the fingers came to the iron handcuff; then, to his great joy, the arm moved forward. The fingers were beyond the obstruction. They were within the cache. They were searching, groping. He could tell by the movements of her biceps that his own hand clutched.

Throatily he asked questions. Did

she feel anything? She did! She did! What—what was it? She thought it was the bag. He made curious squealing noises that expressed his delight.

He blabbered to her—begged her to be careful and not push the bag out of her reach. He praised her. He slapped her on the shoulders. He used a mixture of endearing terms in several languages. Drunk with the thought that he was winning out against all the difficulties, he slobbered kisses on her cheeks.

She had it. Coldly she whispered the words. The fold of the bag was in her fingers. He adjured her to be careful. Easy, easy!

The band of iron held up the passage of the jewel pouch. The thing was too bulky to pass the handcuff hidden in the hole. She paused a moment, exhausted by the efforts made by her fingers. In the silence the praiseful words of Strike flowed out continuously. Mad words.

She interrupted his fulsome flattery. It was impossible to get the leather pouch by the iron handcuff that gripped her right arm; but—wait, wait till she explained. The mouth of the bag was toward her, it would be feasible to insert her fingers into it and bring the jewels handful by handful out of the hole! Captain Strike kissed her again and again. He stroked her head, her cheeks, her supple neck. He told her that no woman such as she, breathed in the whole of Africa.

She made a little sound that suggested victory. The left arm was withdrawing itself from the hole. Strike felt it slipping through his fingers. He was choking with expectation. The hand itself came through. The hand clenched, full. Something fell on the shelf.

FRANTICALLY he struck another match. He uttered a cry of intense joy—joy that had the quality of pain. He was kissing the things that were in her hand! Kissing them, clutching them, hunting for those few that had slipped through her fingers on to the ledge of rock.

They were blazing eyes in the light of the match. Wicked eyes. They were alive, vicious, spiteful.

Strike was weeping. Weeping in the darkness. The girl was silent, listening, chained to the wall of rock by the cruel iron that gripped her arm.

The man swung upon her. He begged her to get the remainder of the treasure.

He ordered her, bullied her, cursed her loudly.

Another handful came from the cache. Another match was wasted to flash the prismatic lights from the stones. Strike shouted in triumph. He chanted a song of victory. All the days and nights that he had spent in pursuing this will-o'-the-wisp were forgotten now. He stuffed the gems into the pockets of his shorts, into the bosom of his shirt.

Another handful and another. The girl was weary. She protested. Her position caused by the imprisoned arm made the work doubly hard. She refused to make further efforts in the matter of salvage.

Strike was angry. He seized her by the shoulders and shook her violently. Did she know how many days and nights he had spent in the pursuit of this treasure? Did she? Did she? Following it from one place to another! Seeking clues, checking all the whispered stories that were told of it. From the Zambesi to the Niger he had followed the trail—thirsty, hungry, daring death. Now did she think he would listen to her moans of weariness? No, no! She had to get the rest of the gems from the leather pouch....

The work was finished at last. The handfuls became smaller and smaller. Three stones, two, one. The slim hand came out at last empty. The long fingers, so she explained, had explored every crevice of the pouch. There was not another gem left.

Strike, insane with the lust that was upon him, spoke to her. Brutally he told of his plans. "Your people will trail you here," he said. "They'll get here for sure tomorrow. Perhaps today. They'll know how to work that damned handcuff. Let you loose quick, eh?"

He waited. The girl did not speak.

STRIKE continued, his words sounding strange and hollow in the darkness: "I've got to clear out," he said. "They'd put a bullet in me for kidding you to show me the stuff. Risk my life if I stayed around."

He laughed loudly, as if the bare mention of any matter that put his life in jeopardy now that he was in possession of the Thousand Eyes of Fire was sheer insanity. Of course it was.

"So that's that," he said. "You just sit quiet here and wait for the family to come along."

In the darkness he felt for the stair-

way that would carry him up to the hot sands far above. The girl sighed softly, then spoke.

"You are really going?" she asked.

"Why, yes," answered Strike. "Silly to stop. Your bunch will be as mad as hornets. They'd drill me full of holes."

"Will you do something for me?" murmured the girl. Her voice was soft and pleading. "Please! The goatskin water-bag around my neck. Bring it so that I can get it to my lips."

Strike moved closer to her. His fingers groped for the bag, found it, and pushed it toward her hidden left hand. The kindly darkness hid that strong sinewy brown hand that waited the approach of Captain Strike.

THE dagger hit Strike directly under the heart. He staggered, made an ineffectual attempt to grasp the rocky stairway, fell to his knees, and rolled over the slippery ledge into the depths below.

The girl listened for the splash as his body hit the water. She was quite calm. It was true, as Strike had said, that her family would follow her. Now she had to make up a story that would convince them of her innocence. . . . The brutal white man had dragged her to the Wells of Kel-Efudar. He had beaten her. She felt certain there were marks on her shoulders where Strike had gripped her. She would show those marks. . . .

The Christian dog had made her scoop the treasure from the cache, but she had waited her moment. By trickery she had brought him to her side, had driven a dagger into his ribs and had sent him hurtling into the fearsome depths below the ledge.

Quietly she tested the story. It had no weak spots. She would be a heroine to her people. Her name and her exploit would be told around camp-fires in the desert. She laughed softly. The iron band was not painful. She would have a little sleep before her family arrived. There was a young man who had ridden away with the men. He would surely be in the pursuing party, and it would please him to see her looking beautiful and refreshed as she told the story.

It was nice and silent there in the well. . . . She marveled at the noise made by the body of Strike as it hit the water far below. What a big brute he was! How wonderful was a dagger, thrust swiftly in the darkness.

REAL EXPERIENCES



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A Son of the Frontier

By JOHN ABERNATHY

MY purpose in writing this book is to give the reader a better understanding of American frontier life in the early days of the great West. All that I have related is from actual experience; my whole life from my childhood was spent on the great plains of our Western country, battling with wild horses, wild cattle and wild beasts of all kinds, and oftentimes with wild members of the human family.

At the age of five I was at home in the saddle, and at ten I was a seasoned range-cattle rider; and when I reached my teens, I took to riding wild horses and had the feeling that I could ride anything. I slept right on the ground, using my saddle for a pillow. My six-shooter was my constant companion.

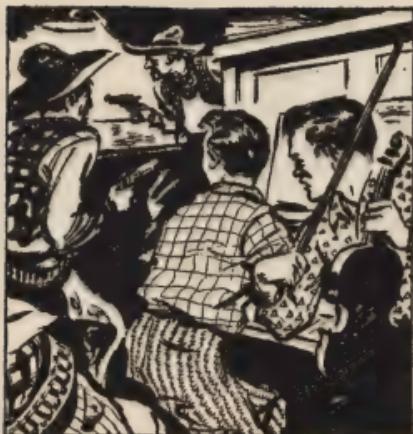
I have caught over a thousand wolves with my hands, and I suppose I have ridden that many bad horses. During my career as an officer of the Government, I captured hundreds of outlaws single-handed and alone, and placed seven hundred and eighty-two men in the penitentiary.

I was born in Bosque County, Texas, January 28, 1876, the second son, and

fifth and youngest child, of Martin Van Buren Abernathy and Kittie (Williams) Thompson Abernathy, his wife. The Abernathy family was of Scottish origin.

The days of my childhood were distinguished by some definite natural tendencies which were to characterize and influence my whole future life. I was fond of the free and adventurous life of the section. I loved horses and dogs and was greatly interested in learning the nature, habits and life of the various wild animals and birds of the neighborhood. I also had a love and natural aptitude for music, both vocal and instrumental, and although my opportunities to develop my musical bent were small, I made the most of them, and learned to play the piano and violin and to sing many songs and hymns. The schooling of my childhood was limited to less than two weeks, and my religious instruction was received from my mother, who kept a watchful eye over my actions, trying to instill principles of right and wrong.

IN 1882 my father was thrilled with the stories of opportunity in western Texas. Like thousands of others who



helped blaze the trail for civilization, Van Abernathy loaded all of the family belongings into covered wagons and started about October 15, 1882. There were three wagons, each drawn by two yoke of oxen. There were six saddle-horses, each of the three boy riders having two horses. A herd of three hundred stock cattle was taken along. The riders were Forrest, Van Junior, and myself. Forrest Thompson was my half-brother. About six weeks were required to travel the distance from Waco to Sweetwater, where Father decided to locate.

Upon our arrival at Sweetwater, my father installed the family in a large tent. Sweetwater, indeed, was mostly a town of tents. The western line of permanent settlements in north Texas was in the vicinity of Weatherford, Parker County. Jay Gould was building the Texas and Pacific main line from Fort Worth to El Paso.

While the different grading gangs pushed the Texas and Pacific construction across the Pecos Valley that winter, the main quarters for ranchmen, cowboys, outlaws, gamblers, railroad gangs and ruffians who followed the boom, were in Sweetwater—this tented city was temporarily the metropolis of the frontier.

In each of the gambling-houses every kind of game of chance known to the gambling world was in constant operation. The doors were never locked, each resort operating every day and night of the year including Sundays and holidays. Perhaps the largest and most prosperous business of all was the gambling.

About the only law in Nolan County then was the rule of the six-shooter. When persons had disputes, they set-

tled their quarrels with guns instead of appealing to the courts; for killing a man, the slayer might be offered a drink at the bar; but if a man were to steal a yearling, a mob would stage a public hanging.

AT this period things began to happen rapidly in my young life. I was now six years old, and my brother Van Junior was ten. We both liked music, and to develop our talent we frequently went to a drug-store that sold musical instruments, to play the piano, violin and accordion. Our playing proved popular and drew many customers to the store—mostly cowboys and gamblers. Forrest Thompson, our half-brother, noting our success, sought a wider and more lucrative field for our performance, and finally made a deal with the proprietor of the Palace Bar, who agreed to employ us to play each night until midnight, paying each of us thirteen dollars a night.

Christmas week in Sweetwater could hardly be described as a time of peace and good-will. Every night one or more men were killed in the saloons, but this caused little notice or surprise. This killing mania reached its climax this year one Saturday night about ten o'clock, at the Palace Bar, where we were playing.

A feud had long existed between two saloons—the Palace and the Gilstrap. Gilstrap and his bartender first entered the door of the Palace, I was at the piano, and my brother was playing the fiddle. We heard a noise, and somebody shouted: "Look out!" Gillio, who was known as the crack shot of the town, was standing toward the rear of the main bar with his right hand upon the back bar. The first shot fired shattered Gillio's right hand as he reached with the left hand for a six-shooter. Lunging forward, Gillio fired, hitting Gilstrap. A bullet killed Gillio, also his partner Shiflet. There must have been more than twenty shots fired during the affray.

When the smoke cleared away, Gilstrap's bartender also was dying. The saloon was crowded at the time of the battle, and a number of the bullets hit the piano and put an end to our music for that night; and it was the best of good luck that we lived to tell the story.

Following the affray in the Palace Bar, our father made inquiry as to the source of the money his two young sons

had been earning. He had been at the Bitter Creek ranch all week looking after the cattle, but as was his custom, he came home for the week-end to remain with the family. We had been giving our earnings to Forrest Thompson, our elder half-brother, who in turn gave the cash to our mother. Upon learning the whole truth, Mother immediately put a stop to our playing at the Palace, as neither of our parents approved of us making our money in this way.

Promoters of every kind of entertainment sought our services, but only once did we appear in public again at Sweetwater, this being at the opera house, where the Simms Sisters were performing. The Simms organization was a traveling show troupe. The manager offered our parents eighty-five dollars per month for each if we would be permitted to join the troupe, and promised to give us a musical education. Our mother not only refused to permit her boys to join the show—she was so angry at such a proposal that she threatened to scald the manager unless he ceased his efforts to take her young children away from her fireside.

WHEN I was seven years old, we were moving four hundred and eighty head of cattle to Nolan County, and camped at Logan's Gap, Comanche County, Texas. There were about two inches of snow on the ground, and that night my father gave orders that we would have to stand guard around the herd, as that was the kind of night that cattle stampeded. My half-brother, Forrest Thompson, and my own brother, Van, who was four years older than I, and myself were the riders. Being the youngest of the three, my father gave me the choice of the hours to stand guard. I decided to go on guard duty at four o'clock in the morning.

The night was very cold, and when I was called I did hate to get out of that warm bed; but I took my position on duty, riding slowly around the herd for a few times, and then stopped just west of them. The cattle seemed to be sound asleep, and I was also sleepy and cold. Then suddenly, like a flash, the whole herd was up and coming toward me.

I knew it was a stampede, and my little horse Barlow seemed to realize it also, and was off like a bullet. Through the mesquite the hoofs of the cattle roared like a cyclone. They were doing all they could, and Barlow was doing all

he could. It seemed that they were gaining on us, and I was looking back, and hollering and cursing. I knew a few "cuss words" in Spanish, and I used them, and kept going like a blue blaze.

Barlow put his foot in a hole and almost turned a cat. I lost my hat, and the cold night air was cutting me like a knife. I realized I couldn't get to the right or left of the cattle, and I knew if I fell, that would be the end. I guess we had traveled three miles at that break-neck speed, and I had just about given up hope, but I hung on and started to sing one of my favorite religious hymns. Suddenly my horse broke into a trot, and I looked back: the cattle had stopped.

I slipped out of the saddle, put my arms as high up on Barlow as they would reach. He, like his rider, was wringing wet and shivering, and I could hear his heart throb as if it would burst. I knew it wouldn't do to let him stand, so I turned him around and started back to the herd, about thirty feet away, and they began to give and shy from me.

Realizing they weren't accustomed to anyone on foot, I got back on Barlow and started around the herd in a slow walk, humming the song all the time, while I shivered from head to foot with the cold. I had ridden around the cattle two or three times, and they were all fast lying down; and when I reached the east side of the herd, I heard my father's voice calling: "Oh, Jack!" I answered as strong as I could, but I was so cold I couldn't holler very loud, and when Father dashed up, he said:

"Jack, how come you here?"

I said: "Barlow brought me here."

He said: "Did you follow this herd?"

"No, Father, the herd followed me. Didn't you ever hear of the man who run so many Comanche Indians, he was in the lead?"

I was jerking all over, I was so cold.

"Jack, you're freezing to death," said Father; and he took off his overcoat and threw it over me.

"Take the coat off, Father," I said, "and put it over Barlow; he's the one that's suffering, and he's the one that saved me. If it hadn't been for him, I wouldn't be here."

FATHER and I started to build a fire for the night, and presently along came my two brothers, Van bringing my hat that I had lost, and we camped for the night.

I was only nine years of age, when I

secured a job as a range rider on the A-K-X ranch. The A-K-X camp was located ten miles southwest of the Van Abernathy ranch on Bitter Creek. I had no trouble holding a job on the range, for I was clever with a rope.

In those days the law among ranchmen was that the maverick became the property of the ranch outfit whose cowboy was first to throw the lariat around its neck. The youngsters usually were offered the first throw in lassoing a maverick because the older cowboys believed in giving the young boys a chance to win the prize. There was an extremely generous feeling toward me among the older cowboys, and they showed their interest by seeing to it that I had a fair chance in both work and sports. Each cowboy who rode the range was equipped with eight riding-horses, a saddle, bridle and lariat rope, branding iron and a six-shooter. I was too small to handle a big .45 heavy frame gun, so I was equipped with a smaller .38 pistol.

It cost me about one hundred dollars to buy my entire outfit, which included a coat and pants made of California cloth—the best of material, red broadcloth shirt, a broad-brim hat, buckskin gloves, fancy riding chaps and boots that were made to order. A slicker coat for stormy weather was carried behind the saddle. Like all other cowboys, my outfit was not complete without a good supply of tobacco and brown cigarette papers, carried in the shirt pocket. I soon learned to read by studying the printed labels on tobacco sacks.

MY first job as a range rider on the A-K-X ranch, was to ride all day among the cattle. John Gray, a lad of twenty-four, was my first riding-partner. All range riders went in pairs. Boys reared on the plains and on horseback, as I was, early developed sufficient endurance to withstand the hardships of such a life.

John and I slept separately at night on tarpaulins, which were carried during the daytime on the chuck wagon. These "tarps" were thrown upon the ground. Navajo blankets were used for covers. To keep the centipedes and rattlesnakes from crawling over us, we would lay the lariat rope around the bedding in the belief that snakes would not crawl over the lariat; but we soon learned that the most venomous pest of the plains would not stop for a little thing like a lariat.

Cowboys had ethics and manners which were lived up to, under rules of the range. No cowboy was permitted to ask for food. The custom was to wait till the cook cried: "Chuckaway!" Then there was a wild scramble and rattling of spurs as the cowboys rushed toward the end of the chuck-wagon. The first cowboy to reach the wagon got the choice spaces between spokes in the wagon wheel, in which to lay his six-shooter. None were permitted to eat without removing their guns.

No cowboy was permitted to use vile language or tell offensive stories while eating. Violation of this rule meant punishment termed, "putting the leggings on them," which consisted in placing the offender over the wagon-tongue and whipping him with leggings by the entire gang. If the cowboy resisted, his companions held his feet and hands while the lash was applied. Once punished in this manner, seldom did the cowboy ever violate the rule of the range a second time.

AT the age of eleven, in 1887, I was one of the cowboys chosen by the A-K-X ranch to drive a very large herd of cattle northward over the old trail from Bitter Creek to Englewood, a distance of about five hundred miles. There were about twenty-five cowboys, horsewranglers and a cook in the outfit. There were over one hundred head of saddle-horses for the cowboys.

Leaving Bitter Creek, the trail went north, crossing Red River near the mouth of the Pease River to the east of Vernon, Texas. The trail led on northward across what is now Tillman County, Oklahoma, passing through the Wichita Mountains near the present-day town of Mountain Park, Kiowa County. In order to get through the Indian country, it was necessary to furnish the tribal members with a fat beef every day or two while on the journey.

Perhaps the most exciting experience along the entire journey was when the great herd from the A-K-X ranch reached the south bank of the South Canadian River. The crossing was west of where that stream is intersected by the boundary between the present Dewey and Roger Mills counties, Oklahoma. The river was about a mile wide at the place of the crossing; the current was very swift, and the water was so deep that the entire herd had to swim part of the distance in crossing. As the cattle

plunged into the water, it was necessary to force many of them, for they seemed to realize the danger. A hundred or more cattle of the herd were drowned. During the most exciting part of the crossing, the entire herd began "milling" (going round and round in closely massed formation) while in the center of the stream. Every cowboy in the outfit was firing his six-shooter, and all were yelling at the top of their voices. It seemed as though every cow in the herd was bawling in a tone expressing fear. The din was terrifying, even to seasoned cowboys. The excitement was most intense and for a time it was feared the entire herd would be drowned and swept down the raging stream.

Finally, as a climax to the excitement, George Gardner, herd boss and foreman of the A-K-X, leaped from his horse and walked on the backs of the cattle, running, cursing and firing his pistol rapidly. He reloaded the pistol several times from his cartridge belt, and continued to fire as he urged other cowboys in the outfit to do likewise. When Gardner reached the north edge of the herd, one old cow took a lead for the north bank, and the entire herd followed.

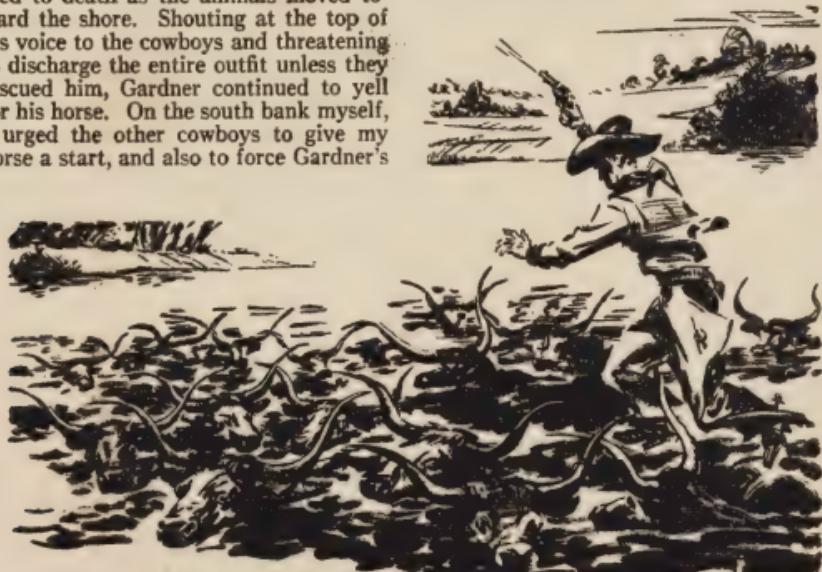
Realizing his perilous position as the cattle began to move out of the stream and separate, Gardner knew that unless he reached his horse quickly, he either would be swept under by the current between the swimming cattle, or be trampled to death as the animals moved toward the shore. Shouting at the top of his voice to the cowboys and threatening to discharge the entire outfit unless they rescued him, Gardner continued to yell for his horse. On the south bank myself, I urged the other cowboys to give my horse a start, and also to force Gardner's

horse into the water so it would follow me. I reached Gardner in time to save him. Gardner's act was the most daring feat I ever witnessed during my life as a cowboy in driving cattle up the trail.

JUST after crossing the South Canadian, a heavy rain began falling which did not let up for over eight hours. The thunder and lightning were almost constant during the downpour. The herd was halted, but the restless ones moved slowly forward. All cowboys were ordered to the front of the herd. The entire force was somewhat depressed in spirits following the trying ordeal in crossing the stream, and also because of the prospects of trouble as a result of the terrific storm.

I was in the rear at the time Gardner gave the order for the riders to move to the front. A rider from another large herd which had crossed ahead of ours, located about four miles to the north of the A-K-X herd, had informed Gardner of their location. He urged the A-K-X outfit to hold back the herd, fearing trouble.

When I reached the front, by pushing my horse through the herd of cattle, I joined a bunch of about twenty of the riders, standing with the heads of their horses in a circle. One man, a stranger to our crew, seemed to be doing all of the talking, or I should say, he was doing all the cursing. I soon learned, upon listen-



ing, that he was the boss of the other herd on ahead of us. He finally exclaimed in an excited voice:

"I wish that God Almighty, the old bald-headed ---- would send a bolt of lightning through me!"

Almost instantly, it seemed to me, there was a blinding flash of lightning, and simultaneously, a heavy thunder-clap, and each horse, including mine, dropped to its knees. We thought we had been struck, as we were dazed for a moment. I started to leave, for I wanted to get away. I looked at the foreman of the herd ahead; and I noticed that he, as well as his horse, was down upon the ground, bleeding. There was blood on the top of the man's head, also blood on the belly of the horse. Both were dead.

I cannot remember how I worked my way back to the chuck-wagon. Though I had been very hungry just before this tragic incident, my hunger was all gone after being an amazed witness to such a scene. I was too young to investigate or gain personal knowledge as to the disposition that was made of the body of the victim of this tragedy. I know that none of the other boys wanted to talk about it, and consequently I was never able to induce any of them to discuss the matter with me, but it made a great impression upon the whole outfit.

WHEN I was fifteen years old, in the spring of 1891, I had become a full-fledged cowboy, so I decided to break away from the guiding hands of my parents on the Bitter Creek Ranch country, leave the A-K-X Ranch and go to the great South Plains.

Bald Pete was reputed to be one of the wildest of the broncos on the A-K-X Ranch. I was ready to leave the ranch when this outlaw was given to me, on condition that I could ride the horse. No other cowboy on the ranch offered to ride this animal, though there were a number who perhaps were able to do so. Bald Pete was about fifteen hands high, weighed about eight hundred pounds, and remained thin and bony regardless of how well he was fed.

I tried to pet Bald Pete, but he would not stand kind treatment and would always paw and kick as though he wished to kill me. I never got on this horse that he did not try to pitch me off. The vicious brute could kick my feet out of the stirrups as fast as I could put them in. So, after mounting, I would jerk my

feet out of the stirrups, gripping them into his shoulders until he finished pitching. I was thrown a few times before I got onto the tricks of this horse.

LEAVING Bitter Creek for the South Plains, I decided to measure my strength by riding him to the J-A Ranch. This vast property interest was owned by the Widow Adair of England. The J-A was a part of the famous Goodnight Ranch, one of the biggest in the entire Southwest. I followed the cattle trail from Sweetwater to a frontier store near where Post City, Texas, now stands. I arrived at the town of Matador the fifth day of the ride. About two weeks after my arrival, I traded a Navajo blanket for a pair of greyhounds. I fed the dogs well, and while making the rounds through the cañons I let the dogs chase after coyotes, which were plentiful in that area.

I now applied to the ranch boss, Mr. Walch, for a job riding the range, which paid thirty dollars per month with board and lodging. After I had worked three or four months, I went to Mr. Walch and told him that I understood they wanted a man to break wild horses—that I would like to have the job.

"Well, my son," replied Walch, "you will have to ride four horses a day till they quit pitching; if you can stand the grade, I will give you a try-out."

I asked him what the requirements were, and he replied: "You will have to saddle your horse, get on him, roll a cigarette and make it smoke before you leave the saddle."

I said: "This is pretty tough; where's your horse?" And he replied: "I'll have the boys rope one for you."

Within a few minutes two cowboys came from the corral leading a dark buckskin horse. They were kind enough to help saddle the bronco. This horse had more white in the eyes than I liked to see. I got my tobacco-sack handy, a cigarette paper singled out, and as I walked around to get on the horse, I said: "Boys, has this horse any bad tricks? Tell me about it, for I want to know." I noticed the boys were winking at each other as they were saddling the bronco. This made me suspicious. I felt sure they were giving me a real outlaw. I heard one remark that at one time a saddle had been placed upon the outlaw's back, but that they could not get any rider to tackle it. In placing a saddle upon this outlaw's back, it was

necessary to snub its head to the horn of the saddle on another horse.

When everything was ready, I said to the boys, "Here goes nothing," placed one foot in the stirrup and leaped into the saddle as I shouted: "Pull the bridle off—all I want is a rope!"

This was done, and the fight was on between the outlaw horse and myself. The horse jumped high and began pitching. As the outlaw came down, it landed stiff-legged. I began rolling the cigarette. The horse kept on pitching, but I managed to get the cigarette into my mouth, lighted a match and made two draws, puffing enough smoke to convince the boss that I could qualify.

The horse kept on pitching. After lighting the cigarette that was required under the test, I had to do some real riding in order to remain in the saddle, which I managed to do until the horse quit pitching. I was so weak that I could hardly get off that horse. The fight had taken nearly all of my strength and nervous energy. I lay down on the ground to rest for a moment.

One of the Chinese cooks came toward me with a tumbler filled with wine, which I drank, and within a minute or two it so refreshed me that I felt in shape again to attempt to conquer the outlaw horse. After the excitement was over, the ranch boss told me I was hired, by saying: "Jack, you have won the grapes."

Later the cowboys admitted to me that no one had ever before ridden that horse or attempted to conquer him.

As the official bronco-buster for the J-A Ranch, I rode the first saddle on a total of no less than three hundred and eight wild horses.

ABOUT April 15th of that spring the cow works started on the J-A Ranch. The riders went south to the Cow House cañon, a distance of about one hundred sixty miles from the Goodnight headquarters. The boss of the range said to me: "I know you like to hunt; I'm going to let you take your two greyhounds as far as Matador. I'll put you in next to the mountains as we journey south—you might get a loafer wolf." Of course this suggestion interested me greatly.

The cowboys rode from a half to three-quarters of a mile apart, with orders to take all forked-hoof animals regardless of brands. On the first day out we did not find any "loafers," but I had a serious accident. My horse hit a cliff and turned a somersault with me



when I was after a cow. The fall broke the curb on the bridle, and I came near being killed as a result. I was too sore the following morning to wear my six-shooter, and I left it at the chuck-wagon.

We had been riding over an hour on the morning of the second day, when I rode right up to two big loafer wolves. They looked like mountain lions to me at first. These loafers did not seem frightened at the sight of us. They had killed a cow, and were eating it. I yelled at my two little dogs, and they went after the wolves. Almost before I knew it, I saw the dogs tie into one of the loafers.

By the time I got to them, the loafers had cut the side of one of my dogs. The poor dog was crawling, tearing its own entrails with the hind feet, trying to get to the wolf and aid the other dog. The wolf and the other dog were both on their hind legs, fighting savagely. I never in my life have seen more nerve and loyalty than was displayed that day by my wounded greyhound and his comrade.

My hair almost stood up as I listened to the exchange of snaps between the dog and wolf. I knew these snaps spelled death to one or the other. I wish I could express my feelings as I watched this great struggle. I never before owned such faithful dogs; and as they battled there they were facing death—doing it all for me. I sprang from the saddle, hitting the ground within two feet of the fighting animals. The wolf whirled toward me, and I struck it with my right hand. This big loafer shut his jaws on my right, but thanks to my good luck the hand was far enough inside the mouth to avoid being caught between the long sharp canine teeth. It was that ac-

cidental hand-thrust, back of the canine teeth, that taught me how to grapple wolves.

I gripped the lower jaw with the right hand, throwing the left hand over the wolf's upper jaw. It seemed that I had almost supernatural strength as I hurled this monster to the ground. I landed on top of the wolf as we resumed the struggle. This being my first experience in fighting a wolf with my bare hands, I did not realize that the front feet of the loafer would claw me, and was facing defeat. With one powerful stroke, the loafer struck the left hand, breaking my grip on the upper jaw. I then realized my perilous position.

The wolf moved its head, and I felt its canine teeth enter my left forearm, cutting the flesh to the bone. The leaders were severed, and blood began streaming from the wound into the wolf's mouth. I began battling for a new hold on the loafer, and managed to get a new grip similar to the one I originally had on the jaw. In this position, as we lay there on the ground, the wounded arm was just over the wolf's mouth. The right hand held the animal's mouth open, permitting nearly every drop of blood from my wounded arm to drain into the beast's mouth, and I could hear the animal gurgle the blood as we lay there and struggled.

My head was almost against the head of the wolf. Had the wolf not slashed the forearm upon breaking the original handhold, it possibly would have slashed the jugular vein and produced death for me. Our heads were so close together, it was just a case of neck and neck. The only way I managed to keep the wolf away from my neck was by the firm grip which I had with the right hand. It was life or death for me. I used all the strength I had in holding this grip. Luckily I managed to maintain my hold.

WHILE I was struggling with the wolf, I heard the beat of a horse's hoofs, and from the regularity of the beats I knew it wasn't a loose horse. The next thing I heard was:

"What the hell you doing?"

I recognized that it was my brother's voice. I replied:

"Everything I can, Van."

Almost instantly I saw a six-shooter placed against the wolf's head, and I cried: "Van, don't shoot. Get the curb off my bridle and we'll wire his jaws."

The curb on my bridle was a home-made affair. I had made the curb out of baling wire that morning to replace the regular curb broken the day previous when my horse fell with me. Van brought the curb while I continued to hold the wolf. We wired the jaws so that it could not bite, also wired the feet, then took it to the chuck wagon.

I tied up the wounded arm with a silk handkerchief which I was wearing around my neck. This stopped the blood, but I was in great pain. My wound continued to grow more painful, but I did not leave until I went to the aid of the wounded dog. I cut the strings off my saddle and tied up the wound in the dog's side the best I could. My brother Van aided me. The dog could not get up, being too weak. The other dog was not hurt except for a few minor cuts on the nose. I let Van carry the wolf, because my arm was paining me so badly. He took the animal to the chuck-wagon about four miles back. I went ahead and covered the territory assigned to both of us, bringing up the herd in the round-up. When we reached Matador, the wolf was placed on the scales. It weighed 127 pounds, while my own weight was 130.

THAT night we camped about eighteen miles south from the place where this wolf catch was made. The cowboys made a fuss over the affair and also over me.

I went to the range boss and asked him to let Van and me guard together. The boss permitted this, and we went on guard duty at three o'clock in the morning. At about five o'clock, after we had finished our guard duty, Van and I began gathering up scraps from the chuck-wagon. We secured a piece of raw beef and a fresh canteen of water, and without waiting for breakfast, we rode the eighteen miles to find the wounded dog.

When we got to the dog it was still alive. We placed before it the raw meat, but it refused to eat. I then made a dent in the top of my white hat, which I filled with water from the canteen. The dog gulped down the water. In a moment he was stricken with a spasm and died. I had not known that drinking water would bring on a spasm, and I was astonished and deeply grieved at the result of my efforts to help the poor sufferer.

The loss of this faithful dog was almost like the loss of a brother to us.

His Own Medicine

By CAPTAIN RAABE

Last year, in "St. Elmo's Fire," Captain Raabe told of running away to sea, and of his westbound voyage across the Atlantic. Here he describes the exciting affair that marked the sailing of the ship from New York.

FOUR weeks in New York. Work from six o'clock in the morning until six at night. Evenings and Sundays spent sight-seeing. Our cargo for the outbound trip came aboard. Trade goods for Sydney, Australia. Came the day for battening down the hatches and clearing for sea. A crew of longshore riggers, sailors who had forsaken the sea for more profitable work ashore, made short work of bending our sails.

Nearly every man of our former crew had been lured away by a "crimp." But to my surprise, we left the dock *without* a crew. The same little tug which had nosed us into the slip took us past Governor's Island and down the bay. The tugboat's crew did most of the work of handling our lines. All was done with such painful silence that I—who had now been signed on as an apprentice, felt too overawed to ask the explanation.

An anchor was cleared. Mr. Kohler, Chips and I overhauled the chain. Rags steered. The Captain and Mr. Wolsey paced up and down the quarterdeck.

About a mile north of the Narrows, a half mile from the Long Island shore, beyond hailing distance from the fleet of anchored vessels, the tugboat's engine-room gong clanked. Her puffing ceased, our bow was swung against the ebbing tide. There our anchor rumbled down. The tug departed. The *Dolphin* lay waiting in ominous silence.

Night fell, gloomy, dreary. Midnight came. Then a shout rang out:

"All hands on deck!"

As I started from sound sleep, the words grated sharply into my nerves.

We tumbled out. Through the light fog which had gathered, I saw the lights of a tugboat which was about to come



alongside. The whole afterguard was on deck.

"Take his bow line," Mr. Kohler barked at me; then at the cook: "Steward, you take the stern line. Make fast, both of you, then come here and lend a hand with this junk."

Ten oblong bundles of flesh and rags, corpselike, limp, the "junk" turned out to be. None too gently they were being passed onto our rail by the tugboat's crew. We took hold and dragged them over, the handiest way.

"Fling 'em down any old way; you're not handling eggs," shouted Mr. Woolsey.

We dropped them on deck. After these living corpses came eleven grimy sailors' clothes-bags. These were tossed from the tug and landed helter-skelter on top of the pile of unconscious figures.

Eleven bags had come, and only ten men! Somebody had made a mistake, but was that any of my business? However, when the man who had supervised the job on the tug nimbly vaulted the rail and stood on our deck, I knew that, if some one were guilty of an oversight, it was not he. For that man proved to be the dapper dandy, the subtle crimp, Mr. Mum—who had stolen our crew.

Mr. Mum did not bother to check up on the goods he had delivered. Nonchalantly he stepped before the Captain.

"Well, there they are, Skipper." He said this in quite a friendly voice, indicating his handy work with a sweep of his hand. "There's the ten of 'em, bag an' dunnage, hale an' hardy. You'll find them all right when they come to."

"Huh," grunted the Captain, disdainfully surveying the heap by the light of a lantern. "That's what *you* say. I want to get a better look at them before we settle." Then he ordered to us: "Drag the lot of 'em into the fo'c'stle."

Mum's voice sounded less friendly now: "Well, how about the tug? He's in a

hurry to get through. He's waitin' fer me. I aint bring no dead ones."

Both of his hands went to his coat pockets. I noticed that.

"Let him wait," growled the Captain. "Nothing like being sure when dealing with this sort of game."

"Take your time, Skipper," came from the tug's pilot-house. "I aint worrying about a minute or two more or less."

The engineer's grinning face was framed by the engine-room door. I saw his sly wink at the Captain as we started dragging the sorry lot into the forecastle. There we hoisted each limp figure into a bunk. With the lantern held high, the Captain peered into each face; then, without a word of comment, he seized grimy wrist after wrist to feel the pulse. Mum stuck right to the Captain's heels.

Mr. Kohler sauntered in, his hands carelessly toying with his cap. Nonchalantly he leaned against the side of a bunk, a mildly interested bystander.

"You're a hard man to deal wid, Skipper," grumbled the crimp. "Honest, I wouldn't of tried to do you dirt."

"You're right, I am a hard man when I'm driven to it," the Captain snapped.

He had just seized the wrist of the fifth man. All at once he stiffened as though he had made a shocking discovery.

"Here! What's this?"

The crimp was startled. The thought that in one case the knockout drops might have proven fatal struck him. His eyes darted upon the Captain's hand. For just one moment he was off his guard!

But in that same moment Mr. Kohler's hand went up. Like a leopard he leaped, and instantly something blunt and heavy descended upon Mum's head. Down he slumped. Lightning-like, the second mate pounced upon his victim. Something he had held concealed in his cap gleamed and tinkled. A quick move—click-click!—a pair of handcuffs snapped shut upon Mr. Mum's wrists. Two more clicks at the ankles, and Mr. Kohler stood up.

"All clear!" shouted he through the forecastle door as the Captain lowered his lantern, then bent over the fettered man and relieved his pockets of two bulldog pistols.

"Cast off!" came Mr. Woolsey's voice from somewhere on the dark deck.

"Good work! See you in the morning," came from the tugboat's pilot-house.

Soon the tug was swallowed by the fog. And the Captain calmly padlocked the forecastle door.

He knew how to deal with crimps.

The Ghost

An American engineer catches him red-handed in a Mexican Mine.

IN the mining districts of northern Mexico, the Mexican workmen believe with assurance that a ghost is always seen in one of the tunnels of a mine preceding a rich strike. All that one has to do to find the hidden wealth is to follow the ghost, and he will lead the way to the ore. At the Montañas, in the mountains of Durango, I myself met the ghost in the mine.

I was in Mexico on a tourist's passport that forbade my working for pay, waiting for the arrival of my permanent passport, for which I had applied. When that came, I would take over the working of the Montañas; but until that time the present engineer, a German by the name of Shultz, would remain in charge.

I found Shultz, a tall, lean man whose hobby was amateur astronomy, at work in the tiny assay-room that he had fixed up in back of the commissary. He had just finished an assay. I watched the needle of his delicate balances quiver to a stop, and read the result.

"Three-kilo ore!" I exclaimed. "That's pretty good stuff!"

"That's because I took my samples from the vein end," he told me. "If I'd taken them from the dump, that wouldn't have assayed a kilo!"

I looked at him questioningly. He turned to face me.

"High-graders!" he said. "You might as well know it now as later. All of our best ore is being stolen somewhere between the tunnel and the surface!"

High-graders! I inquired of Shultz if he had any suspicions as to where the ore was going. He shook his head in puzzlement. His only neighbor was a Mexican by the name of Don Luis, a politician at the moment out of favor in Government circles. He operated an adjoining mine just over the ridge from the Montañas. It was supposed to be a low-grade hole, but Don Luis seemed to make out, probably because he paid his miners much less than any American could.

in Green Pants

By FREDERICK ALAN MATTOX



"And your miners?" I asked. "Have they any explanation to offer?"

"Too superstitious," Shultz said sourly. "They have very lengthy and complete explanations to offer, but they all deal with the supernatural. You can talk to them yourself if you want. I'll introduce you to Pánfilo, the foreman."

We found Pánfilo leaning against a wooden post by the sorting-floor, smoking a corn-husk cigarette. He was a good-looking man of around sixty years, with closely clipped white hair. He smiled with dignity and shook my hand.

"The explanation of the missing ore, señor?" he asked, smiling through even white teeth. He shrugged delicately. "It is very simple. It is *los mineritos* who take it. *Los mineritos* are the ghosts of the old miners who died many years ago. They still inhabit deserted tunnels. When they enter a mine, the richest of the ore is taken by them to melt in their own forges deep under the ground. You, señor, when you have stood in an empty tunnel, will have heard the tap of their drills sounding deep in the mountain."

"It is the sound of drilling in the other levels," Shultz explained. "The sound-waves carry through the rock." His glance at me said: "What did I tell you? Superstitious!"

Pánfilo remained unconvinced.

"I have never before worked in a mine that was infested by *los mineritos*," he affirmed; "but once in my father's time there was such a one—"

Shultz and I went down into the mine. It was an old working, and consequently the tunneling was haphazard and disorderly, the old miners having followed the veins of metal as they found them. With miners' carbide lamps in our hands, we descended into the earth on chicken ladders, long wooden poles with notches cut for the feet.

Work was going on in the first and second levels, but the lower ones were deserted. We went to the drift end of Number Two tunnel. Miners were drilling into the rock, preparing for blasting.

"We fire our shots at sundown," Shultz said. "That lets the powder fumes clear out overnight. The ore that is broken down is taken out in the morning. I keep the door to the mine locked from sundown till work-time the following day. But somehow during that time, when the mine is supposedly empty and the doors locked, the newly broken ore is sorted over and the high-grade carted away!"

We explored the lower levels and found nothing to explain the mystery.

SOME days later we were sitting in the office of the commissary when Pánfilo burst into the room, his eyes shining with eagerness and excitement.

"Señor," Pánfilo burst out, "a ghost has been seen in the mine! A ghost in green pants. One of the miners saw him in the deserted third level."

Shultz and I glanced at each other.

"Let's have a look," I suggested.

Shultz got to his feet and we started for the doorway.

"Perhaps there will be a rich strike," Pánfilo encouraged. "If you can but find the ghost and follow him!"

We made our way, followed by Pánfilo, toward the entrance to the mine. From halfway between the commissary building and the mine, we saw a stream of men pouring out of the tunnel mouth, leaving the mine, though it was still mid-morning.

"It is the ghost in the green pants," Pánfilo explained. "The story has spread until all the men know about it."

Did we not remember the mine of which he had spoken but the other day, he went on—the mine in which his father had worked, and which had been nearly ruined by *los mineritos*, the ghosts of the old miners? In that mine all the rich ore had been stolen also. But the men had caught one of the ghosts in a tunnel one day. Of course the ghost could not be killed, but he had been beaten severely with thorny *ocotillo* sticks, after which the mine had been left quite free from ghosts.

"The men have come up to cut themselves *ocotillo* sticks," he concluded. "Then they will go back with them and endeavor to catch the one in the green pants and beat him!"

Shultz and I chose newly filled carbide lamps and descended into the mine. We hastened to the third level, but on exploring it, found it deserted. I was rather uncertain as to where to seek next. Shultz made the decision for us.

"There's an abandoned prospect-tunnel leading out of that pocket halfway between the second and third level," he said. "It would be like Pánfilo to call that the third level."

We climbed back up the chicken ladder again, and stepped out onto the floor of the pocket. With our carbide lamps we explored its walls. Halfway around, we found the narrow mouth of a tunnel. I felt Shultz clutch my arm. He had put out his light, and was signaling for me to do the same. I obeyed the gesture. As my eyes became adjusted to the darkness, I saw, far down the tunnel ahead of us, a tiny golden glow of light.

We crept forward in darkness over the damp dustiness of the mine floor. The light ahead of us grew in size. I heard Shultz swearing under his breath. He too had seen what I was seeing: *In the circle of golden light there was the tiny figure of a man wearing green pants!*

AT that moment I stumbled and fell heavily over a pile of loose rock, and the light faded away on down the tunnel ahead of us. I sat up and rubbed my shin. Shultz bent over me. He picked up a piece of the loose rock, and I sensed that he was weighing it in his hands. Suddenly his lamp went on again. Before us on the tunnel floor were heaps and piles of high-grade silver ore!

"There's your missing high-grade," I said, a little shakily. "The ghost was getting it, after all."

"I knew this tunnel was here," Shultz admitted, "but I haven't been in it since I surveyed the mine a year ago. It runs straight toward Don Luis' property, and I think they abandoned it because it was running into his workings. Let's go ahead."

He put out his light, and we went on, staying close to the wall of the rock. Ahead of us the golden light appeared again. It was growing brighter, coming back toward us.

Shultz pulled me with him behind a pile of ore.

The light filled the tunnel, and we could hear the muffled sound of footsteps. When they were opposite us, Shultz stepped out into the light. I followed him. There in the narrow passage we found the wizened little figure of a Mexican wearing green corduroy trousers, and carrying a carbide lamp.

"Don Luis!" Shultz exclaimed.

THE man shrank back in fright and surprise, then recovered.

"Ah, Señor Shultz," he said. "I was just examining your tunnel to see if it encroached upon my property."

Shultz eyed him, openly suspicious. Suddenly he grabbed his arm and hustled him down the tunnel. I followed. At the tunnel end, an opening had been cut. Beyond it lay the maze of Don Luis' own workings.

"Ha!" Shultz said fiercely. "So you're the *hombre* that's been stealing my high-grade ore!"

"Stealing?" Don Luis queried with composure. "Your ore has not been stolen. It is right here in your mine before you."

"Do you mean to say," Shultz demanded, "that you didn't cut that opening so as to take this metal out through your mine?"

"Cut the opening?" Don Luis kept up the fiction of his position admirably. "Not only did I not cut it, but I did not know it existed. If I went through it now, I could not find my way to the surface! I will have to go back through the Montefieblas, the way I came."

He shook his arm from Shultz's grasp and turned to go. Shultz looked at me helplessly. What could we do? The ore had not yet been removed from the mine. Don Luis was undoubtedly the thief, but we could prove nothing. I shrugged resignedly, and watched Don Luis depart down the tunnel.

There had been the growing sound of footsteps hurrying through the passages of the mine. As Don Luis reached the main shaft, I heard these quicken to a roar of thunder, and a joyous shouting.

Suddenly Shultz, quicker-witted than I, burst into laughter. He started to run down the tunnel, calling over-shoulder:

"Come on, and let's be in on the fun!"

In an instant I understood, and was running after him. The eager miners, thorny *ocotillos* in their hands, had found their quarry, the one in the green pants, and were flying in hot pursuit, eager to beat him with their cactus whips and rid the mine of its ghosts.



First At the Fire

By no means an unusual episode, but none the less vivid and memorable.

By J. WALTER BRIGGS

FIRE in the city is a terrible thing. Fire in the country is a horror, grim and soul-searing, nothing less. No trained firemen and sometimes no water—for the average dug well on the farm can be dipped dry in a few minutes.

In the autumn of 1932 I was working at a garage in Poughkeepsie, but I lived on a small place in the country where the neighbors were from a quarter- to a half-mile apart.

One night, after working late to repair the lighting plant at the house, I noticed an unnatural brightness in the northern sky.

I knew instantly that a furious fire was raging not far away, and I shouted to my wife to grab a couple pails and hurry out. She was in the car by the time I had the engine turning, and we roared out of the yard and up the dirt road as fast as the wheels would turn. As we topped a long hill, the location of the fire was plainly evident.

"It's the barn," I heard my wife say, above the rattle of tin pails and slapping fenders. "Thank God it's not the house."

I sensed her meaning readily, as I thought of Mrs. K.—, a bed-ridden invalid who weighed something like two hundred pounds. It would have been a terrible task to have moved the woman.

As we drew near I could see the fire had been burning for some time. The shingles were gone from the roof, though the rafters were still standing, red-hot and blazing like a fiery grid against the sky. Sparks rained heavily toward us.

As I pulled into the yard a safe distance from the fierce heat, I saw the whole side of the great barn bulge and heave outward. Through the opening, blazing objects soared like sky-rockets, then went rolling along the ground. One came in our direction and I discovered it was a chicken, feathers a mass of flames.

We had expected to find at least a few neighbors on the job, and it was a dis-

tinct shock when I realized that my wife and I were alone. Mr. K.— was standing in the yard only partly clothed, wringing his hands and yelling. His wife was screaming and wailing from somewhere within the house.

"For God's sake," I cried to my wife, as I grabbed the pails, "get down to Bentley's place and send for help. Go across the fields—you can make it quicker that way than with the car. Use their telephone. Tell everyone to bring milk-cans and pails. If the wind should change the house will go sure."

Without a word, she started running and I heard the rattle of stones as she fell over a stone wall across the road. Then I turned my attention to the roaring furnace so near at hand.

A wagon standing not far from the barn was blazing, and fat sparks were falling on a shingled shed roof that I knew housed valuable farm machinery. I found an old ladder that reached the eaves, and partly filling my pails from a trickle of water that passed for a brook, swarmed up and dashed their muddy contents across the smoking surface. I repeated this two or three times, and then suddenly thought about Mr. K.—. Where had he gone?

DROPPING my pails, I gazed about with streaming eyes, while sparks and blazing wood rained over my head and shoulders. Then I discovered him, dashing madly back and forth so near the fire that it was a wonder his clothing had not ignited. I sensed that he was in real danger, for he was insane with terror, and a blazing timber might fall and pin him to the hot earth at any moment.

I shouted, but my voice was little more than a smoky croak. Then a Niagara of burning hay cascaded down from a mow, and instantly he was hidden from view. Throwing my coat-tails up and over my head, I leaped toward the spot

had disappeared. It was an

awful experience. The skin of my fingers and hands blistered as I groped my way along. Gusts of scorching air swirled under the coat and the coat protected my face and eyes, and I could smell my own hair singeing where the parted coat-tails left some exposed. Something struck me like a hot cannon ball, almost throwing me off my feet. A fierce odor of burning feathers told me it was another chicken.

Then I found him, for I fell prone when my feet encountered his prostrate body. He was moaning faintly, and his shirt had started to char in a half-dozen places. Luckily the avalanche of burning hay had missed him by a few yards, but a few minutes more of exposure to the terrific heat and smoke would have finished him.

I beat out the fire that was eating at his shirt and started backing away, dragging him with me. He was a heavy man and I made slow progress, but after what seemed an age I reached the road and left him there in the middle, for I saw the shed roof was burning in several places.

Shortly after that cars commenced to come, and I had to hurry back and pull the half-dead farmer out of their path. Soon more than a hundred people swarmed around the fire, for the telephone operator had called every family who had a phone within a radius of five miles.

We saved all the other buildings by spreading blankets, carpets and bags over the roofs, and keeping them wet down with water from the little brook and the well; and as the wind did not change the house was in no danger at any time.

Along toward morning the fire burned itself out, and most of the people went home. Mr. K.— was up and around by that time, and able to thank us for what we had accomplished. He never knew who pulled him out of the fire, and naturally I did not tell him. My hands were pretty well scorched, but I managed to hold a glass of cider when he brought a pail of it from the cellar, and I drank it too, though it smarted my blistered lips.

I grabbed a few mouthfuls of breakfast and started for work at the usual time, after I had spent quite some effort cutting my shoes loose from my feet with my pocket knife. They were so scorched that they no longer resembled shoes, and had curled up on the end till they looked like a pair of old-fashioned ice skates.

Ten Years

*As told
to
CHARLES
DUTTON*



WE marched all that day; at night camped. There was a wall to build, the search for stones, the wondering if it would ever be high enough. Though our officers evidently looked for another attack, it didn't come. Not having guard-duty, I was able to sleep that night.

I don't remember how long it took us to reach the main camp of the Légion in Syria. Three days, I think. The last day's marching was through sand—hot desert—and our equipment was heavy. Why we had been thrust off the train and marched overland was something we discussed, growled about, concluded nothing. We did reach the camp at last.

It was the main Légion post. A group of great trees suddenly broke the sharp whiteness of the sand—a palm forest. Here the Légion had its camp. The buildings were permanent ones, and there were perhaps four thousand men. A little village had grown up around the camp.

I stayed there a little while; then we were sent out in the desert. We never knew, as a rule, where we were going. There had been firing all the time I was in the camp. Sharpshooters would hide behind those sand-hills and take a shot at any moving figure. . . . There was a Russian lieutenant, whose five years' service was to end that night. I saw him walk across the drill-ground; suddenly he threw up his arms and fell to the ground. A sharpshooter had got him. It was to put an end to this that we were sent into the desert. There were two companies of us, two hundred and forty men, and mules to carry the machine-guns and equipment.

We had no trouble till the second night. We built our usual stone wall, digging a trench to sink the mules from sight. At nine, just as the bugle blew, came an attack. It was a stubborn bat-

in the Foreign Legion

An Iowa boy who served two enlistments fighting under the French flag continues his graphic story.

By ORVAL CHENEVOETH

tle. Again and again the Druses reached the wall. Luckily we had put up wire entanglements; those helped.

In this fight, which lasted from nine until one, you had a chance to see the real Légion. We were outnumbered. Not until morning did we know the enemy was three thousand strong. The Légionaries might have no morals, might be drunk every night; but when it came to battle, that was something else. No matter what the officers ordered, the men obeyed. Their courage was a fine thing.

It was after one when the last shot was fired. Not until two did we get any sleep. By then the captain decided the enemy would not come back. We had earned our rest. The cost was heavy. There had been forty killed, fifty wounded. Runners were sent back to the main camp, for ambulances and reinforcements.

In the morning we saw the ground in front of the wall. It was filled with bodies. In all there must have been over five hundred. I was one of those sent out to pick up arms. With me was Sylvestre.

He stopped before a Druse lying on his side. I noticed the man had a long beard. Sylvestre started to turn him over with his foot. Suddenly we saw that the man was not dead. His arm came up; in his hand was a revolver. But he was too slow. Sylvestre, before he could fire, had run him through with his bayonet.

It was the first time I saw the characteristic trick of a wounded Druse. He will fire as long as he has ammunition. When it gives out, he plays dead; and when you search his body, he tries to stab you. How they must have hated the French! We learned to give no quarter. We did not bury the dead, but we never left any wounded. When we went off one of those desert battlefields, they were all dead. . . .

We rested for several days after this skirmish. Then came reinforcements. Every company, after a battle, is re-

inforced to its original strength. We set out again. We marched ninety miles, to a little town of mud houses of the Druses. They had the habit of hiding their treasures, gold and silver, jewels, in the mud walls. Sometimes we found them. One Pole in our company found almost three thousand dollars' worth of gold and jewels. He kept it, of course. The officers ask no questions about this loot. They would only know about it when some soldier who had been without funds started in to get drunk night after night. I never had any luck. The most I ever found was a few gold coins worth under ten dollars.

Sylvestre was different. He always had money. He bought me cigarettes; shared his water. The fact I hardly ever drank wine filled him with amazement. Almost every night he warned me that men who drank water died early. If true, there is little fear he would have an untimely death.

I SUPPOSE the French have some record of these skirmishes. To us, they were simply places in the desert, little mud towns. All through the Druse country, groups of troops, companies of the Légion, were trying to drive back the scattered bands of natives. It was serious work. They had no fear, and would fight against overwhelming odds. Often we had little idea what was the name of the place where we attacked. . . . I never knew where I got my wound. In a sense it was a lucky one.

After two days' rest, our reinforcements came, and the two companies had their full number again. We started out, this time over the desert. We were told we could have one cup of water a day from our canteens. Water is always a serious problem. I have seen men fighting with stones and bayonets over a canteen—have seen men drop out from



which we were following. And in the desert he is out of luck. There are no mules, and he is left behind. He can't keep up with the company as best he can. In the desert, with the Druses following behind, to fall out means death—and not a pleasant death.

WHEN the Druse women—they follow their men—find a soldier who has dropped behind his column, they kill him. Not nicely, but painfully. We found, at times, soldiers whose stomachs had been slit open and filled with rocks and sand. It evidently had been done while they were alive. Certain portions of their bodies were always cut off. To the Druse mind there could be no greater humiliation than this. Another form of torture, rather common later, was to cut off the soles of the feet of the wounded. Then they let them suffer for a while by making them walk over the hot sand. We took care not to drop out.

My wound was received in a bayonet charge. That was a little unusual. We had built our stone wall. That night went by without anything happening. Then at dawn we were attacked. There were three successive attacks on the wall. Then the sergeant gave the order to fix bayonets and go out. It was a short action. With a rush, we managed to drive them back. The firing had almost stopped. Then—I thought some one had kicked me in the leg, and I fell.

It didn't seem to be much of a wound, at first. It was made, judging by the weapons we captured, by a British bullet, fired by a British gun. But the corporal gave it a look, then swore. I was placed on a mule, and with the other wounded sent back to a little town. It was far from a pleasant journey.

When possible, to send back the wounded, mules are used. There is a kind of a pack laid across the animal's back, and a man lies on each side, supported by cords. It's a hellish ride. You jerk and sway; you travel at a snail's pace; flies bother you; the sun beats down on your face. But it's the way many a man has reached the hospital.

At a *dépôt*, I was placed on the floor of a small building. They laid me on a dirty mattress crawling with fleas, and placed over me a sheet. Medical attention I did not have. A cloth was wrapped around my leg, but that was all. All night it pained; and the heat and the

flies are impossible to describe. I was not alone. Perhaps thirty others lay there—all presumed to be slightly wounded; but three died during the night, crying for water with their last breath.

The next day I was placed in an ambulance, and we started back for Beirut. I think it took us about twenty hours. My leg had swollen, and I was feverish. I lost all sense of time. The hospital, when I reached it, was a good one.

St. John's Hospital was the gift of a rich Englishman. The nurses were all French, the finest women I ever knew. The hospital was pretty full when I went in, crowded before I left. The Druse rebellion was getting alarming, and men were coming in all the time.

The first month I was in bed. But for months afterward the wound did not heal as it should. I got along, but I could not walk very far. After two months I was asked one day if I wanted to help around the hospital. For a while I worked carrying stretchers; the men were mostly black soldiers of the regular French army. Then I was sent to help in the operating-room.

One night, from nine to four in the morning, I saw the doctors take off sixty arms and legs. There had been a battle somewhere, and the badly wounded had been rushed to St. John's. They were all blacks. Some of them were horribly cut up, but they made no complaints; never groaned. I've never forgotten that night. I can still see that white operating-room, feel the terrific heat, the bright lights in the ceiling.

I STAYED in the hospital almost six months. I heard the Légion was constantly in battle. Then one day I was sent back.

This time it was to a new company: The 29th Company of the Fourth Battalion of the First Regiment of the Légion Etrangère. It won everlasting fame by its fierce fighting. When I reached it, I found I was not the only American. There were Gilbert Claire—that was his Légion name, but his real one was Bennett Doty—and a friend of his, John Harvey. He was Welsh. They were the two who deserted, some time after I was sent to the company. I was asked to go along with them. I decided not to take the chance. If I did, I might never get out of the Légion. They deserted. Almost in sight of the Turkish border they were captured.



this month's
complete
novel

INSPECTOR TOPE stars in Ben Ames Williams' newest novel. And Ben Ames Williams' novel stars in the June Redbook! A great story, wherein the renowned Inspector turns his back on the world of crime, takes a vacation—and walks headlong into a baffling murder! "Overnight Guest" is one of those novels that you will read, enjoy and tell your friends about—it's a real enthusiasm-generator. And it is complete in June Redbook, plus the regular contents of this sparkling magazine. Don't miss it — on sale May 3rd.

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HEALTHY NERVES! "Any one who spends much time in water sports can't afford to trifle with jumpy nerves," says Harold ("Stubby") Kruger, Olympic swimmer and water polo star. Above, you see "Stubby" in Hollywood — snapped by the color camera. He says, "I smoke a great deal, and Camels don't ever ruffle my nerves."